

THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE HOME-BASED WORKERS

**TRANSFORMATION OF SPACE AND PLACE
THROUGH HOMEWORK: THE EXPERIENCES
OF FEMALE HOME-BASED WORKERS**

By

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ABSTRACT

This feminist and geographic study is an exploratory qualitative analysis of the lived experiences of female home-based workers as they are confronted with the challenge of collapsing home and work lives and spaces. In this thesis a focus on the everyday lives of women homeworkers reveals complex experiences of the transformation of space and place through homework. In-depth interviews with 20 women homeworkers, doing white-collar work, in Hamilton and surrounding regions were used in this study to investigate the experiences of this group of waged workers. This study challenges the neglect of the homework issue in the geographic literature to date and demonstrates the need for ongoing interdisciplinary research on this issue.

In examining the experiences of women homeworkers this study looks at various issues. These are: women's satisfaction/dissatisfaction with homework, reasons for doing home-based work, social and spatial isolation, the devaluation homeworkers face, the gendered division of labour, the construction of a work space, the integration of women's roles, the meaning of the home for homeworkers, representations of homework as a child care strategy, or as a means of providing homeworkers with flexibility in combining home and work roles, or providing personal autonomy, and social and economic vulnerability in doing homework. In understanding these issues and the diverse and complex ways women experience homework this study has four main objectives. One, to investigate some of the social processes/forces shaping those experiences in a specific time and place,

in order to build on and contribute to the work in feminist geography on the general socialist feminist and geographic theory of women and work. In doing so, this study focuses on both gender relations of power within the household (or family) and society at large as socially constructed relations of dominance and inequality between the sexes, and class relations as those relations which give rise to a set of positions within the class structure. Two, to explore the experiences of homeworkers by providing a better understanding of the reality of home-based work and the lives of women doing such work. This is done by: one, accounting for the differences between homeworkers and how this can affect their experience; and two, listening to the voices of female homeworkers who are sharing their homework experience. Three, to construct this research as part of the aim for social change in making this group of workers more visible within society, this study aims to assess homework and the degree to which it is a progressive or regressive strategy for women to undertake. Lastly, to incorporate geographical aspects to the study of homework, by illustrating the importance of space and place in understanding the transformation of the home space.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

Research about female home-based[1] workers doing white-collar work, such as service, clerical, sales, and management, has not kept pace with the growing number of women doing such types of paid work in their home.[2] The lived experiences of female homeworkers as they are confronted with the challenge of collapsing home and work lives and spaces has been a marginalized area of study in both the interdisciplinary and geographic research done in the realm of paid work. If feminists' work is truly to be part of the struggle for social change for women then we must understand the lives of all women, specifically for this thesis those of female home-based workers. This study aims to share knowledge that can aid homeworkers in the struggle for recognition by society and empowerment within society. In particular, this study will provide women with a framework to help them gauge whether working at home may be an attractive strategy for them or not by examining various experiences of women doing homework. Further, this research aims to challenge and deconstruct the dominant discourses and practices of what constitutes "real" work within society. That is, "real" work is work done in the public, productive realm rather than in the private, reproductive realm.

This qualitative study explores the lived experiences of 20 female homeworkers who are witnessing the transformation of space and place by doing paid work in the home.

This study focuses on homeworkers involved in three main types of homework positions: self-employed; independent contractor,[3] and home-based employee. This research has been useful in uncovering the active and diverse ways in which women, in different situations, respond to working in their homes and examines the ways in which they experience and restructure the home as it becomes the central space of their worlds. This study allows us to assess homework on a micro (individual) level by attending to the voices and lived experiences of female homeworkers by placing individual experiences in the broader context of gender relations and class relations shaping women's work. Further, this study examines the larger, social conditions shaping women's experience of homework.

In documenting the experiences of female homeworkers this study examines various issues. These include: gender divisions of labour in the home, women's work space, social and spatial isolation associated with doing homework, degrees of economic and social vulnerability to doing homework, the images of home-based work documented through public discourse, the media, and the literature, reasons for doing homework, interaction of home and work lives, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with homework, the devaluation of paid work at home, and the changed meaning of the home for women. My aims in both choosing to study female homeworkers' experiences and in researching it the way I did were to:

- (1) move beyond the descriptive approaches dominant in home-based work literature by developing a theoretical understanding of home-based work and in doing so, providing female home-based workers with a useful critical analysis of the homeworkers' experiences;

(2) gain a better understanding of the reality of home-based work and the lives of women doing such work by: one: recognizing the diversity of women's experiences in doing homework; and two, listening to the voices of women themselves sharing their experiences;

(3) critically assess the extent to which homework is a progressive (empowering) or regressive (disempowering) strategy for women to undertake in responding to or resisting patriarchal, capitalist relations of power; and

(4) build on the (feminist) geography of homework by situating the study of homework in the context of space and place in order to begin to understand the transformation of the home space through homework .

The specific aims of the thesis are detailed below.

1.2 Theoretical Understanding of Female Homeworkers

Providing an explanation of some of the social forces/processes shaping the experiences of female home-based workers in a particular time and place will allow for a more informed understanding of homeworkers' experiences and the larger conditions affecting their lives. Past research has tended to describe empirical trends as opposed to providing theoretically-informed and empirically-detailed explanations such as those offered in feminist geography. The general features of the conceptual approach used in this study draws significantly on socialist feminist theory, which places importance on both gender relations of power and class relations as important factors in women's oppression. Further, the theoretical approach is informed by arguments in the home-based work literature. In constructing a theoretical framework for this study my aim was to allow for the differences and diversity amongst women to be recognized. This aim is shared by McDowell (1991, 131) who states, "...we need theoretical frameworks that

enable us to deal with the diversity and differences among women.” Further, as Grant (1996, 12) stated, “Feminist geography has matured significantly from the need to make women visible in the 1970 and early 1980s to more recent theoretical sophistication [and] recognition of difference and diversity...” The socialist feminist framework used in this study allowed for differences and diversity of women to be recognized through its theoretical claims which did not treat women homeworkers as a homogeneous group of workers. Further, the theoretical framework used does not assume a single outcome nor a complete understanding of the processes affecting women’s experiences of homework. In McDowell’s (1992, 69) words, “Hegemonic theories that postulate a single outcome tend to be oppressive. However, we must continue to *theorize*, albeit in partial, incomplete, and even contradictory ways...” The importance difference makes to the understanding of women’s homework experiences is further discussed in the next section.

1.3 Feminist Geography and the Geography of Difference

Related to the goal of constructing non-hegemonic theories is the need to expand our knowledge of the importance difference makes by documenting the context of homeworkers’ situation so that their experiences are not seen as, “‘one true story’ with a permanent partiality” (McDowell 1992, 69). This incorporation of difference is consistent with socialist feminism’s move towards diversity in understanding women’s lives. The issues of situatedness, location, and positionality have been of particular concern for feminist geographers (see for example, Keith and Pile 1993; McDowell 1993a; 1993b; Katz and Monk 1993). As Katz and Monk (1993, 4) state, “As Western feminist

scholarship began to mature in the 1980s, attention turned increasingly to the significance of context in shaping women's lives..." Women are not a homogenous group with uniform experiences, rather their experiences are shaped by their particular situation. In order to understand the meaning of the data from research studies, it is necessary to understand where the data is coming from, or in other words, the particular situation or context in which the research participants' experiences have occurred. Therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind "the difference difference makes" in understanding the varying conditions under which women experience homework so we can critically reflect on the structures that influence the actualities of their lives. The principle of contextualization guided the data analysis and research findings of this study; that is, documenting how women's experience of homework is complicated or influenced by various circumstances of their lives (Beach 1989; Dangler 1994). Various personal and situational characteristics were considered in the interpretation of the findings, such as presence or absence of children, age of children,[4] length of time working from home, material resources (such as the ability to afford child care), marital status, life course, and class position.

The development of non-hegemonic theory and explanation also involves listening to the voices of women themselves in order to gain a fuller and more meaningful understanding of the reality of homework and the lives of women doing such work. With the use of the voices of the women I also aim to encourage critical reflection of homeworkers' experiences and not to pass judgment that is definitive. Women's lives have been (mis)interpreted in traditional research studies claiming to be capable of representing everyone equally in an objective, non-involved manner; however, in actuality

it does not represent their experience (Kirby and McKenna 1989). Therefore, this research starts from women's experience of their reality in order to place women at the centre of the creation of knowledge. In reading various home-based work literature, through the media and public discourse, misrepresentations of homework(ers) become evident. For instance, misrepresentations of and contradictions inherent in homework, include claims that homework is a solution to women's dual roles of mother and/or wife and waged worker. Such misrepresentations can be resolved by listening to the voices of women themselves doing such work and sharing their "stories" with us. This will allow for an accurate representation of these women's experiences of homework and in the process provide a realistic assessment of homework's advantages and disadvantages. This is key to ensuring that women deciding to undertake such work are not doing so as a result of false representations of homework. Certain studies have helped to dispel these images (Costello 1988; 1989; Christensen 1989; 1993); however, such images continue to be promoted through the media, public discourse, and literature. Several contradictions inherent in homework are raised by Dangler (1994). How can it be for example that working from home is perceived simultaneously as exploitative and liberating; an expression of worker choice and a reflection of the lack of choice; a creative strategy for combining family and work and the embodiment of women's double burden; a worker's right and a worker's denial of rights; a means of increasing the autonomy and flexibility on the job and constrained autonomy due to women's multiple roles and extended working days; and a means for women to enjoy economic opportunity and yet not a "real job" but something that reinforces women's subordinate economic status within the home and

labour force. Therefore, by focusing on and documenting the lived experiences of these 20 female homeworkers, a better informed discussion on homework will be achieved and in the process the conditions homeworkers experiences in their work and daily lives and its implications for women will be sought out. My third aim is to document the outcomes of doing homework, such as whether homework is an empowering or disempowering work strategy for women.

1.4 Individual and Social Outcomes of Doing Home-Based Work For Women

Related to the prior aim of incorporating difference into the experience of homework, this aim seeks to assess the degree to which homework is a satisfactory/unsatisfactory way for women (on both the individual and societal level) to do paid work based on the experiences of the 20 women homeworkers in this study. A critical assessment of homework as a progressive or regressive paid work accommodation allows one to assess the extent to which homework is an adaptive strategy that is empowering for women and allows them to contest and resist economic patriarchal oppression or the extent to which homework is a tool of economic patriarchal oppression which forces women back into the home. The central question arising from this aim is, “Does homework reinforce the subordinate position of women as a group in both society and the family by simply allowing women to respond to and strengthen the gendered relations of power within society or is it a means for women to resist prevailing gender relations of power?”

1.5 Where is the Geography?: Geographical Understanding of Homework

There are both general and specific ways in which this study adds to our geographical understanding of homework. All the issues discussed in this study are not obviously geographical; however, they are all important in understanding the transformation of space and place through homework. There are various general geographical aspects of homework discussed in this study. First, this is a study of the causes and consequences of women's struggles to reintroduce paid work space into the home space (which as discussed in Chapter Two, is linked to the rise of capitalism which transformed the home from a place of family life to a private sphere of unpaid women's labour). Second, it is a study of how conflicts between roles become manifest in domestic spaces that combine both paid and unpaid labour. Third, it considers the role of the gendered division of labour in shaping conditions of paid work within the home space. Further, this study examines strategies (such as spatial and otherwise) that women use to try to balance productive and reproductive work (such as child care) within the home space. Lastly, this study considers the meaning of the home as a domestic space or non-work realm and how this shapes people's view of paid work in the home and the activities associated with this sphere.

There are specific geographical aspects examined in this study which also relate to the more general geographical issues. This study looks at how women reorganize domestic space to try to facilitate paid work in the home, for instance, creating a separate work space. And related to this issue, this study looks at women's ability to appropriate space within homes spatially designed for the purpose of family life. Further, this study

examines women's changing geographical experience of homework as a result of the home becoming the central area of both waged work and family life, or in other words, how homework affects women's spatial and social interaction by being spatially tied to the home and in the process experiencing geographical isolation. Next, this study examines the notion of place discrimination,[5] that is, how changes in women's work (both paid and unpaid) occur simply as a result of being located in the home space. This change is most evident in the gendered division of labour in shaping conditions of paid work within the home. For instance, changes occur in this division due to women's place location in the home versus outside the home. Lastly, the changed meaning of place (the home) for homeworkers as the home space becomes a domestic and waged work space was addressed. The spatial relations addressed in this context relate to how the home space takes on a new meaning for women as the meaning of the home is no longer simply a place of family life.

1.6 Thesis Outline

This thesis is organized in the following manner. Chapter Two reviews the interdisciplinary and geographic work done to date on female homeworkers and draws on general literature pertaining to women and work. In this chapter, I discuss the specifics of the home-based work studies reported in the literature. Next, I discuss specific issues arising from the studies and particularly those that became central issues of concern for this study. I also discuss how this study relates to previous studies and what this study adds to what has already been. Chapter Three discusses the process of conducting the

research. In this chapter, I discuss the challenges of doing research from the margins. I provide a general discussion of the nature of feminist knowledge, the purpose of feminist research, what is feminist research, and how I went about conducting the research. Further, I provide details about the homeworkers who participated in this study, what themes were explored, and why. Chapter Four outlines my conceptual framework. Here I discuss key arguments of the socialist feminist approach used in this study and arguments from various literature about women's experience of homework and the larger conditions affecting their experience. Various hypotheses have been constructed which will guide the interpretations of the research findings. Chapter Five presents and analyzes the empirical data documenting the lived experiences of female homeworkers. This chapter ends with a discussion of how this study advances our knowledge of female home-based workers' experiences. The final chapter offers an overall summary of the social outcomes of homework as a paid work strategy for women and then moves onto discussing the significance and implications of this study for future research.

Chapter One endnotes

[1]For the purpose of this study homework(ers) and home-based work(ers) are terms that are used interchangeably to refer to paid work in the home or to those women doing paid work in the home.

[2]Chapter Two provides a discussion of the increases of female homeworkers in the Canadian context.

[3]Independent contractor is also referred to in this study and within the literature as independent consultants and independent representatives.

[4]For this study, children's ages are divided in three main categories: younger children (five years or less); young school-aged children (six years to fifteen years); and older children (sixteen years and above)

[5]Place discrimination was a term used by Christensen (1988b). She discussed a specific form of place discrimination; that is, when employers alter the status of workers when they move from the office to the home.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set the context for this study. This is done by: first, examining various definitions of home-based workers which are proposed by scholars and then offering a definition and a classification of homeworkers for this study which draws on those in the existing literature. Second, examining the recent increases in female home-based workers and their occupations in Canada. Third, discussing types of studies done of homework and specific findings from interdisciplinary and geographic research on women doing paid work in the home. Lastly, discussing what this study adds to what has already been done in the literature and how it differs from past studies.

2.2 Definitions and Classification of Homeworkers

There are various definitions of home-based workers in the literature. For instance, Kraut (1988) refers to homeworkers as either supplementary homeworkers or primary homeworkers. The former refers to those individuals who supplement her or his primary work at a conventional work site with a relatively small amount of overflow work done at home. The latter refers to those individuals working at home for a substantial part of their work week instead of working at a more conventional work location. This definition is simplistic in that it groups those working mainly from home into one main category without making any distinctions amongst different types of homeworkers. The

Employment Standards Act of Ontario also offers a definition of homeworkers; however, it is constraining because it omits certain types of homeworkers and the type of work they do, for example it excludes management-type work. It states:

Homeworkers work in a private home for a business owned by someone else. They usually do such things as: sewing, or other manufacturing, stuffing envelopes or other packaging, food preparation, and assembly, repair or alterations (Ministry of Labour, Ontario).

A more inclusive definition was given by Ahrentzen (1990) in her study of homeworkers. Ahrentzen (1990, 750) refers to a home-based worker as an individual who: (1) works out of the home for pay; (2) works either on a part-time or full-time basis, but with the home as the primary workplace; (3) is either self-employed or company employed; and (4) may or may not use telecommunications equipment in her/his work. Ahrentzen's definition is consistent with the definition of home-based workers used in this study.[1] For the purpose of this study, point (3) also includes independent contractors. This definition is broad enough to cover various types of home-based workers, yet it still excludes those who work primarily outside the home.

Christensen (1989) classifies homework positions[2] into three main categories: the home-based employee, the home-based business owner, and the home-based independent contractor. The home-based employee is an individual who is on the company payroll and works at home in addition to some time in the office.[3] These home-based employees are also referred to at times as teleworkers or telecommuters (Christensen 1994). The home-based business owner is an individual who is in business for themselves. The home-based independent contractor may be considered self-employed,

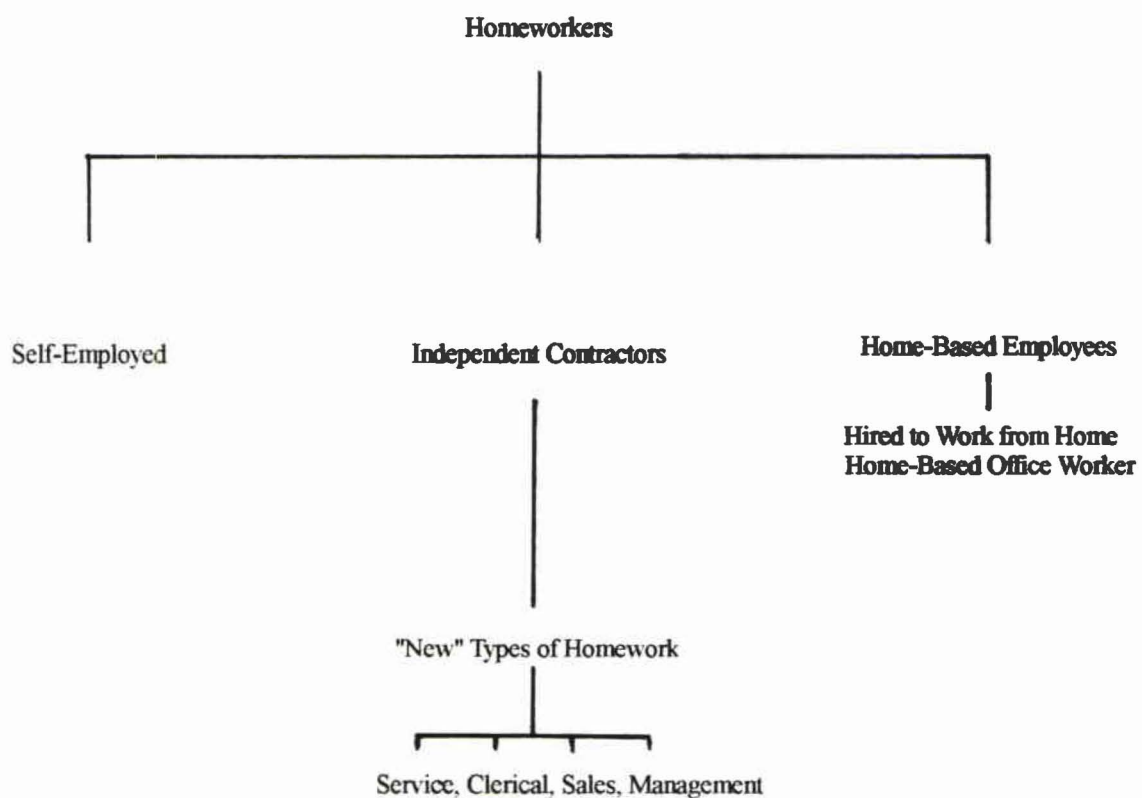
but in a much more ambiguous circumstance. That is, they perform as employees for the company, but are not compensated as such in terms of salaries and benefits.

The classification of homework positions chosen for this study draws from the classification proposed by Christensen. This classification was chosen because it accurately accounts for the three main types of homework positions encountered in this study. Figure 2.1 illustrates the classification of homeworkers for this study. Adding to Christensen's definitions of these homework positions, independent contractors are also those who are hired indirectly by a firm and are independent of the firm. They simply rely on the firms for their pay which is either based on contract work or commission (Dangler 1994). Home-based employees can be hired by a company to work specifically from their homes or given the option to work mainly from home (the home is the main site of paid work). Home-based employees are also referred to at times as teleworkers or telecommuters (Nadwodny 1996). Their wages are based on a set salary, an hourly wage, or piece rate. Further, the type of work all three types of homeworkers are doing is "new" types of homework (this term is discussed below), and includes work in sales, service, clerical, and management (which includes upper, middle, and lower level management).

2.3 The Rise in Female Homeworkers

In Canada, home-based work and those doing such work are increasing. In 1991 there were 743,000 people working at home for pay. One-third of people working at home were self-employed while the remainder were paid employees.[4] Over the past

Figure 2.1: Classification of Homework Positions: Present Study



decade, the proportion of people, in non-agricultural paid occupations, working from home doubled, rising from 3% in 1981 to 6% in 1991. What is significant to note about this overall increase is the increase in the number of women working from home. Between 1981 and 1991, the number of women working at home increased by 69%, compared with 23% for men (Nadwodny 1996).

It has been suggested in the literature that this rise in home-based workers can be attributed to three main factors (Olson 1988; Nadwodny 1996; Manicom 1994; Lozano 1989; Nelson 1988). One factor is economic restructuring. Businesses, governments, and other organizations are increasingly seeking to streamline operations. Home-based employees and independent contractors may eliminate many expenses for the employer, such as overhead costs. Self-employment may also be a means of escaping the uncertainty of the labour market or made necessary by a scarcity of other forms of work (Nadwodny 1996; Gardner 1996; Olson 1988). A second factor suggested for the rise in home-based work is the increased availability and affordability of the personal computer and other telecommunication devices which have allowed work to be done at home and employees to remain well connected to the main office (Nadwodny 1996). Lastly, the rigid labour market which does not allow for flexible work arrangements for women with family responsibilities, nor provides adequate child care, further contributes to the rise in female homeworkers (Lozano 1989; Nelson 1988).

2.4 Occupations of Female Home-Based Workers

The nature of paid work done in the home varies. Homework ranges from

industrial or “traditional” work, such as sizing needles and pins for packets, and pairing shoe laces, to more recent “new” forms of homework, such as clerical, service and managerial type jobs. Although industrial type homework continues to predominate in certain industrialized countries and mainly in developing countries, “new” types of homework are gaining ground in many industrialized countries such as Canada. This rise in the “new” forms of homework can be attributed to the shift from industrial type work to service type work (International Labour Conference 1995; De Villegas 1990).

For women homeworkers, “new” types of homework dominate in Canada today as illustrated in Table 2.1. The common occupations of women working at home fall into four main categories. Clerical and service jobs are the most common, accounting for 29% and 25% of women homeworkers respectively. Further, managerial and administrative and sales were also significant occupations among female homeworkers, accounting for 12% and 10% of women homeworkers respectively. These “new” types of homework are also referred to as white-collar workers (Christensen 1988b).

2.5 Overview of Research Studies and Findings about Female Home-Based Workers

The purpose of this section is twofold: one, to discuss types of studies done about homeworkers; and two, to highlight the findings of this research from the mid-to late 1980s to the present.[5] The majority of the homework studies were done in the United States and a few in Canada and Britain. Further, the majority of studies date back to the mid-to late 1980s. In this section, I first offer a brief overview of the interdisciplinary research about homework(ers).[6] Next, I focus on geographic research about women

Table 2.1

Most Common Female Occupations in Canada, 1991: Working at Home

Occupations	%
Clerical	29
Service	25
Managerial and administrative	12
Sales	10
Artistic, literary, recreational	5
Teaching	4
Product fabricating/ assembling/repairing	4
Medicine and health	2
Social sciences	2
Other	7
Total -%	100
-number	385,610

(Source: Nadwodny, Statistics Canada 1996)

and home-based work. For both the interdisciplinary and geographic research, I discuss the key study methods, the aspects of homework studied, and the types of homeworkers researched. This section ends with a discussion of the major findings/results of female home-based work(ers) research. It includes findings about issues of concern for this study, arguments put forth by scholars concerning homework, and other arguments found in literature relating to women and work. The findings discussed are mainly from the home-based work literature reviewed in this section; however, it also includes literature that examined homework on a more general level.[7] The findings are grouped under various themes which recurred in the literature and were prominent issues of concern for this present study. The literature discussed below documents the lived experiences of female homeworkers and the larger social conditions shaping women's experiences of homework.

2.5.1 Review of Interdisciplinary Literature about Female Home-Based Workers:

Both Costello (1988; 1989) and Gerson and Kraut (1988; Kraut 1989; 1988) presented studies dealing specifically with clerical homeworkers. Costello interviewed 29 women employed by an insurance firm, Wisconsin Physicians Service Insurance Company (referred to as WPS), to work in their homes. The interviews were with five current homeworkers, 21 former homeworkers, and three former managers involved in the clerical homework program. The aims of this qualitative study were to gain insights into the advantages and disadvantages of homework for working women, the interaction between paid work and family life, the social networks and strategies the women forge when doing

paid work from home, and the contradictions between expectations women had about doing homework and the actual realities of working from home.

Gerson and Kraut (1988; Kraut 1989; 1988) in their quantitative analysis of home-based work in various cities in the United States beginning in 1985, compared various aspects of clerical work in the home and in the office. For example, they compared working conditions of female clerical workers at home to those of female clerical workers in the office. This comparison included: one, labour force attachment (total hours worked, total weeks worked, and seniority in firm); two, income, (rate of pay of the two groups of workers); and three, benefits, (the number of homeworkers versus office workers with such benefits as social security, pension contributions, overtime pay, and paid vacations). The authors also analyzed clerical homework, based on issues, such as who works at home and why, quality of work environment and job satisfaction, and the implications of home-based work for women, such as lack of employee benefits. The main purpose of their study was to gather information relevant to the debate surrounding homework; that is, about whether homeworkers are a relatively advantaged group of people who have freely chosen to do their paid work within their homes, or whether homeworkers are an exceptionally exploited group of workers who have not freely chosen to do homework. Gerson and Kraut's (1988) results are based on a total of 297 written questionnaires from both women working at home and in the office.

Christensen (1988a; 1988b; 1989), a major researcher of homework, undertook a study based on the results of a national survey of women homeworkers conducted under the auspices of the United States Department of Health and Human Services with the

cooperation of *Family Circle Magazine*. The magazine published the National Survey on Women and Home-Based work in their January 15, 1985 issue. Christensen's study was based on the survey which included 14,000 women, 7,000 of whom worked at home. The women were involved in clerical work, craftwork, and professional occupations, and the majority were self-employed. Christensen's (1989) study tried to establish a picture of the typical homemaker, the role of technology in clerical homework, and the reasons for home-based work. She took her study a step further by carrying out over 100 interviews with white-collar workers[8] with the intent of, "...go[ing] beyond the rhetoric and hype about home-based work and find out what it really is like" (Christensen 1988a, 161). In her book, *Women and Home-based Work* (1988a) she presented the life stories of twenty female homeworkers, most of whom were married with young children. Others were empty nesters, divorced, or never married. Christensen (1989) has also studied the independent clerical contractor. This study involved interviews with a small sample of this group of workers.[9] Christensen documents the reality of independent contractors' experiences when they leave the office and take on a homework position that trades the dependability of a salary for the uncertainty of an hourly or piece rate. She found that they work in this position often with no guarantee as to the number of hours or projects for which they will be employed, they lose all employee benefits, and work in isolation.

A study undertaken by Allen and Wolkowitz (1987; 1986; Allen 1983; 1989) was based on 90 interviews with female homeworkers in four areas of West Yorkshire, England. The interviews were conducted mainly in 1980 following a survey of over 4,000 households. The homeworkers consisted primarily of industrial homeworkers with a

minority doing white-collar work. The purpose of their qualitative study was to generate a better-informed discussion on homeworking. The issues addressed included aspects of working conditions homeworkers experience and the implications of these for women. Another study by Beach (1989) draws on interviews with fifteen homeworkers, nine females and six males who were all residents of two rural counties in Maine. The majority of the homeworkers were self-employed, with a few being employees. The homeworkers were involved in a wide range of occupations, such as hairdressers, secretaries, day care providers, knitters, and fine art dealers. All the families had one spouse working in the home and had children. The purpose of the study was to illustrate home and work interaction. It focused on the homeworker's use of space and time within the home, and the ability of the homeworker to juggle home and work roles. Beach (1989) used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. She used semi-structured interviews with adults, and structured interviews with verbal children. Also, each family was observed twice in order to get a sense of a typical workday. Daily time logs were kept by the homeworker. This time log provided a quantifiable check on information regarding time-use obtained through the interview and observation.

Nelson (1988) conducted an interesting study of female homeworkers providing family day care in the Vermont area beginning in the summer of 1986. Her data came from two main sources: one, mailed questionnaires completed by 225 day care providers; and two, semi-structured interviews with 62 registered and unregistered family day care providers. Her sample consisted of women who were mostly married (83%) or living with someone (2%). The purpose of her study was to critically assess the notion of family

day care services as a promising employment option. She claimed that the growing success of homework rests on the secondary status of women in the labour force and on the unpaid labour of women at home.

The ability to cope with multiple roles at home was the focus of Ahrentzen's (1990) study. She examined the types of boundaries, such as psychological boundaries (mentally separating home and work lives), and physical boundaries ((re)constructing the home environment), professional homeworkers create to manage role conflict and role overlap.[10] Her research was part of a larger study of homeworkers involving a cross-sectional survey design with self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, a modified time diary, photographs, sketches, and a physical inventory of the home and workspace. Interviews were conducted with 104 homeworkers, 75 women and 29 men between August and December, 1986. Other studies by Deming (1994) and Presser and Bamberger (1993) provide statistical analysis of the characteristics of homeworkers in the United States (including self-employed and wage and salary workers). They use data from the May 1991 and 1985 Current Population Survey conducted by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A conference on homeworking was held in November 1992 in Toronto (Manicom 1994). This conference had two objectives: to educate and to organize. It was organized by the Coalition for Fair Wages and Working Conditions for Homeworkers. The report included discussions of homeworking in different industries and different regions in the world, the range of conditions under which homework is done, issues that are engaging homeworkers and activists, and ideas and resources for future research on homework.

Much discussion focused on industrial homework; however, homework in the service sector was examined to some extent. Lastly, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office placed the homework issue on its agenda at its session held in November 1993 (International Labour Conference 1995). The proceedings from this report discussed many issues relating to or about homework on a global scale. These included, the advantages and disadvantages of homework for women, societal perceptions of homework, and the actual conditions of homework.

One of the most recent analyses of home-based employees or teleworkers, as they are specifically referred to in the study, was undertaken by Johnson (1993; 1996). This study drew on interviews carried out with 20 unionized teleworkers, both women and men in the Canadian Public Service Sector, who were interviewed in 1994 and a year later in 1995. The research design consisted of open-ended qualitative interviews and comparisons of the results of the interviews conducted in both years. The issues examined were reasons for teleworking, a comparison of the workplace in the office and at home in terms of comfort levels of working in the home office versus the central office, and satisfaction with their homework situation.

2.5.2 Review of Geographic Literature about Female Home-Based Workers:[11]

The geographic literature on home-based work is limited. Katz and Monk's edited book (1993) *Full Circles: Geographies of Women Over the Life Course*, included a chapter by Christensen on home-based work. As indicated by Christensen (1993, 55), "This chapter explores another geographic option, that of bringing paid labour into the

home.” Christensen examined how women doing homework merge work and family in one place and by doing so eliminate the journey to work. In the process, new issues and problems are created which vary according to women’s stage in life. Using detailed case studies (see also Christensen 1989), she focused on life course position and how this affects the homework experiences of mothers of young children and older women without dependent children. Christensen examined three distinct groups of women who experience different issues and difficulties working from home. These are women with small children which includes women with children in school or not in school, women with older children, and women without children.

Secondly and most recently, the book *Homeworkers in Global Perspective* (Boris and Prugl 1996) offers various studies of industrial home-based workers in major geographical regions of the world. Although the majority of the essays included in this book focused on female industrial homeworkers, certain issues raised in the essays relate directly to the issues addressed by this study, such as actual working conditions and the implications of these for women doing homework, such as lack of benefits, and low wages, the difficulties female homeworkers face in doing homework, and the (re)structuring of the home space to accommodate homework.

A third geographical account appears in *Remaking Human Geography* (Kobayashi and Mackenzie eds. 1989). In one chapter of this book, Suzanne Mackenzie discussed home-based work as a strategy used by women in adapting to economic restructuring and responding to the problems of maintaining dual roles. Her study is based on a total sample of 122 independent homeworkers located in the Trail-Nelson area of the interior of British

Columbia and in the Kingston area of Eastern Ontario. The sample consisted of women with children and women without children. She focused her analysis on child caregivers and craftworkers. She examined homework as a means of dissolving the rigid, spatially reinforced separation between home and work and between women and men. She maintained that women adopting such a strategy are agents of environmental change. Women adopting such a strategy are creating an environment that fits their needs, which is to fulfill their family commitments and to earn a wage. Mackenzie examined three specific ways in which these women created an environment to suit their activities and domestic community life. First, they developed new sources of employment, and provided new social areas for “work”; as a result, they redefined the nature of work. Second, the homeworkers provided services to other people in the community, resulting in an alteration of where domestic community life and reproductive activities are going on. And consequently, this altered the environment in which domestic community work goes on. As Mackenzie (1989, 51) stated:

For homeworkers, both the household and the neighbourhood become workplace as well as living space, simultaneously public and private space. In fact, the division into public and private becomes an increasingly meaningless one.

Third, the women changed the relations between home and wage workplace by altering the balance of resources and monetary resources which households need. That is, women earning money at home are restructuring the balance between domestic work (producing free services and goods) and wage work (producing money for the purchase of services

and goods). This restructuration alters both the value of labour power and the conditions of its reproduction.

I want to critically examine Mackenzie's claim that homework weakens the public/private split and leads to the restructuring of the relations between women and men. Homework does signify the fact that waged work is not solely being done in the public sphere. Although this should lead to a blurring of the distinctive ideological and material public and private split it does not. Firstly, homework is not a new phenomenon. It has been in existence since the eighteenth century if not before (Boris and Daniels 1989). Yet, the split between private and public spheres emerged with paid work being associated with the public sphere and unpaid work being associated with the private sphere. Another point which challenges Mackenzie's view is that the waged work being done by women within the home is being undervalued in the same way as unpaid work in the private sphere. Consequently, waged work within the home is not distinctively recognized as having entered the realm of the public sphere whereby it is attributed the same status as paid work outside the home (Boris and Daniels 1989). In doing homework, distinctions between the private and public and gendered relations would only weaken (not diminish) if one, the work (both paid and unpaid) done in the home by women received the same status as the work done in the public sphere; and two, if homework challenged the ideologies associated with the private realm so it would not simply merge with women's domestic roles. I agree with Boris and Daniels (1989) who argue that homework will continue to form a significant part of the economy, but unless we begin to question these dominant ideological constructions concerning women's work and the private sphere,

homeworkers will remain an invisible part of the labour force and consequently, women will continue to face devaluation of their paid and unpaid work in the home. Mackenzie's claim will be further assessed in the remainder of this chapter and in a later chapter discussing the research findings of this study.

2.5.3 Major Findings in the Home-Based Work Literature:

2.5.3.1 Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with Home-Based Work:

Whether homeworkers are generally satisfied or dissatisfied with doing homework was not usually reported in the home-based work literature. For instance, Johnson's (1996) study of teleworkers also indicated that those interviewed were very satisfied with their work situations. However, this study did not distinguish between women and men working at home, and therefore, conclusions concerning women's overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with homework cannot be made.

Various studies discussed what factors made homeworkers satisfied or dissatisfied with homework. For instance, Costello (1988; 1989) discussed how homeworkers' job satisfaction is integrally tied to their assessment of the working conditions associated with the WPS homework program. She found that satisfaction increased with the ability to contribute to the family income and this in turn increased women's input into family decision making, allowed them to stay at home and not just be a "housewife", and made it possible to be at home with their children and at the same time continue with the career they chose to do. The following quotes illustrate some of the reasons for these women's satisfaction with homework, "This job has given me my own independent power to make

decisions, to make financial decisions.” Another homeworker states, “I was always asking for money from my husband, and I felt left out of everything...” (Costello 1988, 141).

Costello (1988) also found that some homeworkers had mixed feelings; that is, some homeworkers would feel satisfied some days and dissatisfied others. Dissatisfaction with homework resulted from inadequate wages relative to working in the office, the increased expectations placed on homeworkers’ productivity compared to working in the office, and frustrations over strict supervision, and unpaid work involved in doing homework, such as with time waiting for delivery trucks. Gerson and Kraut (1988) concluded that women working at home were more satisfied with their jobs than those working in the office. Why this was the case or what specific factors contributed to their satisfaction was not expanded upon by the scholars.

Women’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction with homework also relates to feelings of social and spatial isolation when doing paid work in the home. Costello (1988) notes that the feeling of detachment, of “being cut off from the mainstream”, was a concern for many homeworkers. One homeworker in her study states, “The isolation was awful...I had always worked with lots of people. I liked being out in the office...I felt out of it. I was like a recluse...” (Costello 1988, 137). This homeworker agreed:

At first, it was great. I thought this is really it. This is fun. I can finally be home with my kids. And I enjoyed being a domestic person for a while. After a while, I think I started talking like the kids. I missed the interactions with other people. I missed doing what I like doing best, that is being a secretary and being able to work with other people” (Costello 1988, 137).

A homemaker in Christensen's (1993, 75) study also indicated that the isolation she faces within the home is a main reason for her dissatisfaction with homework:

Sometimes when you work in the same place you live, you get the feeling that you never get away. There is a need to get out and get away to break the monotony of being in one place for such long periods of time.

2.5.3.2 Who Works at Home and Why?:

It has been documented in various studies that female homeworkers are more likely to be married with children than not married or married without children (Deming 1994; Kraut and Grambsch 1987; Gerson and Kraut 1988; Kraut 1989; Christensen 1989; Presser and Bamberger 1993). The comparative study carried out by Gerson and Kraut (1988) confirmed that homeworkers were more likely to be married with children under 6 years of age than office workers. For instance, 79% of homeworkers are married compared with 51% of office workers, and 25% of homeworkers have preschool children compared to 13% of office workers. In Christensen's (1989) national study carried out in the United States, she found that the typical female home-based clerical worker was married and more likely to have children under eighteen than not. Presser and Bamberger (1993) found that those women working "all" at home are more likely to have children under the age of five and to be married versus women who do "some" (for instance, bringing work home from the office) or "no" work at home.

The reasons given for working at home were discussed in the home-based work literature. Various literature pointed out that the reasons for doing paid work from home vary (see for example Nelson 1988; Christensen 1989; Presser and Bamberger 1993; Gerson and Kraut 1988; Kraut 1989; Deming 1994).

and Kraut 1988). Nelson's (1988) study found that the motivation for women to offer family day care was threefold: one, the need to earn a second income; two, the women's perceptions of the problems entailed in earning this income, such as the struggle to find adequate care for their children; and three, a personal or ideological commitment to remaining in the home. Christensen (1989) has noted four main reasons for women to work at home. These are: one, family reasons (to care for family and to ease conflicts between work and family); two, job reasons (to be able to work in own way and at own pace); three, office avoidance reasons (to save money on commuting and clothes, and to save time commuting); and four, financial reasons (namely to earn extra money). These findings were further supported by the study conducted on teleworkers in the public service sector (Johnson 1996).

Gerson and Kraut (1988) analyzed the reasons why women work at home in various family and marital situations. This study included women who were married, single, with children, and without children. They found that married homeworkers were more likely to cite having flexibility as the reason for homework. Furthermore, most homeworkers in their study did not cite the need to deal with personal or familial demands as reasons for working at home except, "...women with young children who said that the need for child care motivated them to work at home" (Gerson and Kraut 1988, 59). Interestingly, Gerson and Kraut concluded that the values women hold also influenced women's decision to work from home. They concluded that homeworkers were more likely to express traditional values than were office workers. The greatest difference in values between the two groups of workers pertained to gender roles. For instance, office

workers were more likely to agree with statements advocating a shared household division of labour. Furthermore, they found that homeworkers also placed less emphasis on career advancement. Based on the findings, Gerson and Kraut (1988) suggest that homeworkers may be making decisions about work sites that are commensurate with personal belief systems. That is, homeworkers believed they should place housework and child care first and foremost and that their career should be secondary. Gerson and Kraut (1988, 60) claim, "Presumably, work at home is congruent with this ideology." In Allen and Wolkowitz's (1987) study, they found that in the case of married women with children the expectations placed on them of what it means to be a good mother/wife guided their decision to work in the home. Fifty out of the 90 homeworkers said that their families expected them to stay home rather than go out to work. Further, Allen and Wolkowitz concluded that in a large number of these cases husband's opinion was a crucial factor in women's decision to work from home.

The pressures mothers and wives face within our society can affect their decisions concerning work and specific work arrangements. Working women may find that they are plagued by belief in the "evils" of the working mother, an image or representation which maintains that a child separated from its mother could be irreparably damaged. For instance, Basow (1992, 237) claims:

The fear that children will be harmed if mothers do not stay home or sacrifice their needs to those of their family is a fear that some argue is perpetuated by men because it serves men's needs (someone takes care of all domestic responsibilities for them), because it eliminates women from competing with them in the labour force, and because it maintains their superior power in relation to women.

A statement made by this homemaker reflects the constraining social ideologies which affected her decision to work in the home:

I know that this feeling of mine [being prime nurturer] isn't innate, that it comes from all the conditioning I had as a kid. Mothers were always the ones who stayed home and took care of the kids. When Stewart [husband] offered to do that, I could not accept the idea that he'd be the mom and I'd be the breadwinner. I just couldn't reconcile that switch within myself (Christensen 1993, 66).

Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) and Gerson and Kraut (1988) indicate that for certain homeworkers the decision to work at home were due to their own expectations and personal values of what their roles as mother and wife mean. These conclusions also support the claim by Christensen (1989) that women's prescribed roles constrain their work options. Furthermore, these conclusions raise the question of whether women who do homework, do it for themselves, or whether they do it for their family. Gerson and Kraut (1988) touch on this issue. Their results revealed that women with young children confirmed that their choice reflected familial responsibilities but that this was not true for older women and/or married women who were childless or had older offspring. For instance, homeworkers were more likely than office workers to state that their place of work was based on personal preference. However, what is imperative to note is that homeworkers with children were an exception. Homeworkers with children were more likely to choose homework due to their need to provide child care. Similar findings were reported in Walker's (1989) review of literature on homework. He concluded that men work at home by choice whereas women work at home because of lack of choice. He asserts that for men, "...it affords certain advantages of income or freedom from

commuting and working in an office or factory” (p. 687). For women however, “Their child care and domestic responsibilities, as well as ideological pressure, prevent them from seeking employment outside the home” (p. 687).

Further, working women are also faced with inadequate services and working conditions which ultimately play a role in their decision to work at home. These conditions include the lack of adequate, high quality, affordable, and flexible child care facilities (Nelson 1988). According to Statistics Canada (1994) the number of day care spaces currently available meets only a portion of the child care requirements of Canadian families. In 1990 only 31% of children under six years of age were in formal day care centres which includes workplace day care or regular day care. In addition, working mothers are faced with inflexibility in the work arrangements offered by employers (Christensen 1992). Christensen (1993, 67) notes a particular homemaker's situation which illustrates how the inflexible labour market constrained her work choices after having a child:

...her employer offered Lisa several jobs during her maternity leave, none would have fitted her schedule as a parent since all required travel and overtime..she saw no alternative but to quit, since they offered no middle ground short of a full-time nine-to-five commitment which would have made it impossible to give what she needed to give to parenting. Had her employer had the flexibility to offer Lisa job-sharing, part-time work, or telecommuting, they could have retained the skilled services and invaluable enthusiasm of an experienced employee.

Consequently, the prevalent conditions faced by women, such as the patriarchal, capitalist ideologies maintaining women's primary responsibility for child care and housework and the inadequate working conditions within society for women, create a

labour market with few alternatives for the working woman. This point supports

Dangler's (1994, 120) position:

As it stands now, most women homeworkers lack a vision of better and realistic alternatives around which to organize their lives, as a nation, we have failed to provide the structural basis for such a vision. If this void persists, homeworkers will continue to press for the right to choose homework from among a group of equally dismal employment alternatives.

In other words, home-based work becomes a “better than nothing” choice within a society that offers very little and in turn disallows working women the possibility to choose from a set of viable alternatives. The inadequate conditions faced by women are also noted by Christensen (1989). She challenged the assumption that mothers liked working at home. She found that for many of the women, home employment is much better than non-employment, but it is far from ideal. She concluded that, “It [homework] is an option pursued within a society that offers working mothers few options for flexibility in combining work and family” (Christensen 1989, 194).

What is ironic, is that women face an economic imperative to work, yet are faced with such constraints. As Scarr et. al (1994, 412) claim, “...most families find it essential for both parents to work...and in many families two earners are required to keep the family out of poverty.” Consequently, women are faced with all the disadvantages of a patriarchal, capitalist society that resists accommodating women (Boris and Daniels 1989; Dangler 1994). This conclusion raises the question posed by Anyon (1983, as cited in Dyck 1990, 467), “...how [do] women with young children respond to and attempt to modify the dilemma presented to them in an economic and social climate which simultaneously encourages full-time motherhood and participation in the labour force.”

Working women struggling to coordinate their multiple roles under inadequate social conditions may find themselves turning to such a coping strategy as home-based work. This point is in agreement with Hanson and Pratt's (1995, 223) finding that, "...taking such jobs [as home-based work]...is usually part of a time-management strategy to meet the simultaneous, and very immediate daily demands of earning a wage and caring for a family."

The debate about whether homework is an expression of "choice" by women or whether it is a work option chosen amongst few options surfaces in various homework literature (Dangler 1994; Gerson and Kraut 1988; Walker 1989). For instance, is the decision to work at home a voluntary individual decision made by women and would they choose such a strategy even if a myriad of alternatives were offered? Or, is choosing such a strategy a result of the constraints and lack of alternatives faced by working women which limits the actual choice women have in deciding to do homework? Gerson and Kraut (1988, 50) propose the theory that, "...homeworkers [are] a relatively advantaged group of people who have consciously chosen to do their paid work within their homes." This claim is questionable when looking at the reasons given by the female homeworkers above to work from home. Further, the literature indicates how in certain cases the constraints faced by women in doing homework vary. For example, an older homeworker with independent children in Christensen's (1993) study illustrates how her decision to work in the home was based on lessened constraints because of the age of her children. She states, "One day [when children were no longer living at home] I sat down and said,

“hey, what do I really want to do?” For the first time I had the privilege of doing what I wanted to do and the chance to be happy in my work...”(Christensen 1993, 74).

A significant issue related to women’s decision to work in the home is the sacrifices women make for their families when deciding to work at home. Although not usually discussed in the home-based work literature, personal sacrifices are one of the many consequences of doing homework for women. Two homeworkers in Christensen’s (1993) study illustrate some of the career sacrifices women make by doing homework. An independent contractor states, “I get low pay, boring work, no opportunities for advancement, and no benefits but I get to stay home with my daughter” (Christensen 1993, 62). In another case, a self-employed woman reports that she went from a high profile, socially complex role as a corporate middle manager to working alone on a personal computer in order to be with her children. These findings, documented only by Christensen’s (1993) study, suggest that these women sacrificed their needs and their career for the needs and well-being of their family.

2.5.3.3 The Status of Home-Based Work(ers):

The status attributed to home-based work and to those women doing the work leads to the devaluation of both the paid work in the home and the worker. The separation of the home and work into private (reproductive) and public (productive) spheres, and the coding of the private sphere as women’s domain and the public as men’s has profound implications for women (Mackenzie 1988; Duncan 1996). As Nancy Duncan (1996, 128) claims, “...the public-private distinction is gendered. This binary

opposition is employed to legitimate oppression and dependence on the basis of gender.” The separation of home from wage workplace accompanied patriarchal, capitalist societies. This is argued by feminists to be fundamental to the organization of gender relations and women's everyday practices and experiences because the social and spatial separation of production and reproduction (which includes child care and household demands) has helped to shape the content of women's and men's roles and consequently, the structure of gender relations (Dyck 1990). The influential ideological and material separation of the private and public is succinctly stated by Young (1981, as cited in Allen 1983, 651), “For the separation of home and work has been a very effective ideological construction which combines both patriarchal and capitalist elements.”

As production became concentrated in the factory, family members no longer worked together in the home, where the home and workshop were one, but went off, as individuals, to wage jobs. Thus, in the late 19th century and early 20th century the household became a sphere separated from waged work; it was no longer a place of production, but a private sphere where people pooled their wages to maintain themselves and where they lived (Mackenzie 1988). Within this sphere people carried out essential leisure time functions, such as resting, sleeping, and learning. These home activities became seen as secondary to paid work because the nature of these activities depended on the relations family members had with the public wage sphere. As more and more activities were being transferred from the home to public institutions, such as education, women began to enter the wage sector (Mackenzie 1988). The entrance of women into the waged sphere had considerable consequences for both the working and the

bourgeoisie class and their visions of the “ideal” family (women at home tending to reproductive activities, men working to earn a wage) (Mackenzie and Rose 1983). As a result of the erosion of the “ideal” family, due to women’s entry into wage work and other areas of public life and the displacement of male workers by women, they became expected to remain in the home. This served the interests of both capitalists and patriarchs who wanted to ensure that women’s labour was used in specific ways, such as reproducing, tending, and caring for the future labour force, and that women were not competing for “their” jobs (Basow 1992). As a result, women, in particular middle class women, came to be responsible for the maintenance of the private sphere and their roles became defined by the functions of the home (Mackenzie 1988). Therefore, the conceptual and material boundary between home and work has resulted in women’s association with the private realm. The private sphere has been traditionally associated with the domestic, the family, unwaged labour, reproduction, personal life and a haven versus the public sphere which has been associated with public discourse, the market place, waged labour, and production. This construct resulted in the ideology that what takes place in the private realm is not “real” work. For instance, reproductive work does not meet the requirements of what constitutes “real” work; that is, “real” work is economically productive work, is done for a wage, and is performed in the public realm of production (Allen 1989; McDowell and Pringle 1992). In a session held on the misrepresentation of homework within society at large (Manicom 1994) it was concluded that it is assumed by society at large that “real” work is solely conducted in an office or a factory. The patriarchal ideology that the home is woman’s primary sphere and that the work

performed in the home is not “real” work persists as evident in the status attributed to paid work done in the home and the gendered relations of power in the household which maintains women’s role as housewife (Allen 1983; 1989).

The views associated with the private sphere and the work done within this sphere have directly affected the status attributed to homework. The devaluation of work done by women in the home results then from first, much of the work being carried out within the confines of the household which is judged to be the inferior sphere; second, the unpaid work not conforming to the ideological definitions of “real” work as located in the public domain of waged work; and third, the lesser value attributed to women’s work both inside and outside the home, such that women’s work is secondary to that of men’s or women’s work is easy work (Oakley 1992; Boris and Daniels 1989; Allen and Wolkowitz 1987; Young 1978). This point is in agreement with Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) who suggest that the common conception of “real” work and “real” job as located in the public sphere is so pervasive that people do not integrate their knowledge or experience of homework into their image of work or jobs. Pennington and Westover (1989, 168) also argue:

The fact that the workplace is in the home has been and continues to be an absolutely crucial determinant of the status of homework...It seems that homework is less likely to be seen as “real” work because the woman does not actually “go out to work”.

As a result of this devaluation, homework becomes integrated into women’s domestic role within the home; that is, homework is, “...seen as an extension of women’s household activities” (Dangler 1994, 112). This is of concern because homework thus reinforces women’s subordinate position in the home, attributing them not with the status

of a waged worker, but rather with the status of a mother and/or wife (Beach 1989). Apparently, women's prescribed role as housewife remains a very influential ideology. As Lozano (1989, 122) states, "...a woman at home tends to be perceived as a housewife" regardless of her role as waged worker. What is quite ironic, is that while female homeworkers are not seen as "really" working when they are doing paid work within the home, male homeworkers are seen to be working. For instance:

Unlike the man whose home-based software endeavors qualify him in the eyes of his friends as a "high-tech entrepreneur" his female counterpart is more likely to be thought of as dabbling in business (Lozano 1989, 122).

Evidently, men working at home do not seem to experience the same devalued status.

The experience of devaluation by female homeworkers is supported by the proceedings from the conference on homeworking held in Toronto (Manicom 1994). These indicate that this misrepresentation or myth of homework not being "real" work is based on assumptions about how work is organized, for instance paid work is done in the public sphere and unpaid work is done in the private realm of domesticity, and the role of women in the work force and the family.

The invisibility and devaluation of women's homework is documented in a number of home-based work studies. Costello (1988) states that one problem encountered by homeworkers was the invisibility of their work which was manifest in friends and neighbours coming over for a social chat, dropping in for a visit, or dropping their children off to play presuming they were not "really working". Costello cites illustrative examples of this devaluation of homework. This homeworker states:

Other women outside the home didn't look at you as working, so they think of calling you any time of the day. It is so frustrating. People think it isn't work [but rather] a hobby (Costello 1988, 138).

Another home-based worker mentions how her husband at times failed to regard her work as "real" work. She stated:

It is hard because [my husband] doesn't see it as a job because I am home...A lot of men in this world think that just because you are at home, you aren't doing anything. I think they should have their heads looked at (Costello 1988, 138).

Costello also found that in a few cases homeworkers themselves downplayed the importance of their paid work in the home. For instance, one homeworker when asked by a friend if she worked, responded "No." Christensen (1993) in her study documented the ideological notion that homework was not "real" work. As this homeworker stated:

Because I am a woman, people imagine me wearing an apron. I've heard it in people's voices over the telephone, when I tell them my office is at home. They can't understand that I can have a business and not be making cookies or fudge. They see it as the same kind of thing. They don't see professionalism in it...I don't get this kind of reaction from women who have had children and may have been torn leaving their children with a baby-sitter. But I do get it from men...(Christensen 1993, 71).

The points raised above concerning the devalued status of homework and the studies documenting this devaluation challenge Suzanne Mackenzie's (1989) claims. Evidently, the literature presented indicates that the division between public and private has not weakened and further the power relations between women and men in society have not diminished. Rather, homework becomes viewed as a part of the private, devalued sphere rather than a form of work that challenges the dominant association of the home sphere with unpaid, reproductive work. Further, the relations of inequality between

women and men are strengthened as women homeworkers are not given the status of a waged earner working outside the home and in the process their housewife status is reinforced.

2.5.3.4 Gender Relations in the Home:

The gender division of labour within the home, whereby women continue to be primarily responsible for housework and child care, remains a significant aspect of today's society regardless of whether women are doing paid work outside the home, in the home, or are not doing paid work. The gender division of labour within the home is documented in Statistics Canada's 1990 General Social Survey (see Table 2.2) (Marshall 1993). Table 2.2 shows that the extent to which wives are responsible for housework[12] varies with their employment status. For instance, as women's employment status increases (from part-time to full-time) their housework responsibilities decline. However, this decrease in women's responsibilities was not related to a significant increase in the amount of work taken on by husbands. For instance, in 7% of families where the husband is the single earner, the wife and husband share equally in the cleaning and laundry. This is compared to 13% of dual-earner families, where the wife and husband have an egalitarian division of cleaning and laundry. These findings suggest that women working full-time may find that their responsibilities have decreased somewhat, but that the burden of these continue to fall primarily on them because of their husband's reluctance to do their equal share. Apparently, gender relations within the home endure and the ideology that maintains housework is women's work is still very influential in today's society. Clearly,

Table 2.2:

Primary responsibility for housework of parents under age 65, by employment status of couple, Canada, 1990

Household chores and employment status	Primary responsibility				
	Total	Wife only	Husband only	Wife and husband share equally	Other*
				%	
Meal preparation					
-Dual earner, both working full-time	100	72	13	12	2
-Dual earner, husband full-time, wife part-time	100	86	7	6	-
-Single earner, husband full-time	100	89	5	5	-
Meal clean-up					
-Dual earner, both working full-time	100	59	16	15	6
-Dual earner, husband full-time, wife part-time	100	72	9	10	3
-Single earner, husband full-time	100	78	7	8	3
Cleaning and laundry					
-Dual earner, both working full-time	100	74	7	13	3
-Dual earner, husband full-time, wife part-time	100	86	4	6	-
-Single earner, husband full-time	100	86	4	7	-

*someone other than the wife or husband had primary responsibility for the chore.

(Source: Marshall, Statistics Canada 1993)

Christensen (1988a, xiii) is correct in declaring that, "...the divisions of labour within the home have not kept pace with the changes in the workplace."

The results of studies examining home-based workers and their domestic responsibilities confirm that women continue to hold primary responsibility for domestic chores.[13] However, what is most interesting is that while domestic responsibilities are sometimes renegotiated if a woman works outside, women doing paid work in the home maintain a primary role as homemaker. Beach (1989) from her study of homeworkers found that women homeworkers continue to do most of the housework. Based on these findings, she claimed that women doing paid work in the home reinforces the prevailing stereotype of women's domestic sphere of duties. This notion Beach maintains, would have been directly challenged had women entered men's sphere of work instead of doing paid work in the home.

Studies examining the domestic responsibilities of homeworkers also found that women working at home continue to maintain primary responsibility for housework and child care and in some cases that the responsibilities actually increased as a result of working in the home. For instance, Christensen (1993) found that approximately 75% of home-based workers assumed overall responsibility for housework. Costello (1989, 204) reaches the same conclusion, "Some homeworkers received help from husbands who cleaned the house or cared for children so they could complete their claims adjusting. But most homeworkers retained primary responsibility for the household." This homeworker's response illustrates how the fact that she is "at home" is used to justify her assuming the majority of domestic responsibilities:

The reason is simple, my husband goes to work, and I do not. I am home twenty-four hours a day and things kind of slip back to the age when the mother was always at home with the children. Slowly it turns back to that. I think even women begin to think like that. "It is more of a woman's job to take care of the house and family." We just slip back into it (Christensen 1993, 64).

These conclusions indicate that instead of liberating women from or reducing the burden of the double day, homework intensifies the pressures of both unpaid and paid work and in the process it reinforces the gender division of labour within the household (Allen and Wolkowitz 1987; Boris and Daniels 1989). This point is also made by Dangler (1994, 2) who stated:

What is most problematic about the "homework system," as it has operated in the past and continues to operate for most homeworkers is that it has helped to create and sustain a gender division of labour that not only guarantees the permanence of women's "double burden," but also prevents the development of a healthier integration of family and work life for both sexes.

An interesting case reported in Christensen's (1993) study was that of a homeworker who found that her household responsibilities actually increased relative to when she was working outside the home. This finding was also noted in proceedings from the homework conference (Manicom 1994). This report states that female white-collar homeworkers confirm that when working from home, rather than outside the home, their share of child care and other household responsibilities increase. The increases can be related to the view that since women are at home they should be the ones primarily responsible for housework and further to the what was noted in an earlier section; that is, homework is not "real" work, and thus should not prevent women from decreasing their domestic chores. Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) conclude that homeworkers' families

continue to expect the services of a full-time housewife regardless of the fact that they are also doing paid work. They quote this homemaker who explains how expectations of a full-time housewife persist in her situation:

I get up at 7:30, give the kids breakfast and take them to school. Then I do the washing and clean the house and put my youngest to sleep. I set to work for about two hours from 9 to 11. I stop to prepare a cooked lunch, my husband comes home for this...I cook dinner for 7. After I've put the kids to bed I work from 8 to 10, and then to bed (Allen and Wolkowitz 1987, 126).

Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) raise another interesting point from their results. Forty-one percent of the 90 homeworkers said without further explanation that their families did not expect them to stay at home. However, Allen and Wolkowitz go on to note that none of the husbands contemplated the kind of shift in the division of labour which would have made wives' work outside the home more practical. Succinctly, "Taken-for-granted ideological expectations of the division of labour are so effective that overt control need never emerge. It is these that are the most successful in controlling women" (Allen and Wolkowitz 1987, 131). Therefore, it seems here that self-control internalized by the women themselves, based on views what it means to be a good mother and wife and the expectations of other family members, is a work here in causing the gendered relations of power within the household to remain intact. Mackenzie's (1989) claim that homework restructures the gendered relations between women and men is further refuted by the results of the studies concerning the gender division of labour within the home. The relations of inequality are further illustrated by the fact that female homeworkers continue to fulfill the majority of household responsibilities and that for some the responsibilities

actually increase.

2.5.3.5 Combining Home and Work Lives in the Home Sphere:

An interesting aspect of doing home-based work is women's ability to integrate or separate their home and work roles, and the degree to which conflicts over home and work lives are produced by the interaction of their roles. This issue of conflict between home and work lives and difficulties encountered in combining home and work were common themes discussed in various home-based work literature. Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) acknowledge that women working at home face greater stress and difficulty than those working outside the home. As the pressures of both waged and unwaged work intensifies it becomes very difficult to separate the two spheres. The ability to integrate home and work lives, and the degree to which they experience role conflict, varies for women. This is evident in Christensen's (1993) study. For instance, she concluded that women with small children experienced the maximum degree of conflict between work and family responsibilities, and those whose children have grown and moved out, or those who do not have children, encounter the least amount of conflict. Their roles of mother, wife, and worker are less likely to overlap. Costello's (1988) study documented the difficulties homeworkers with children face in separating their roles. For instance, some homeworkers realized that they were snapping at their children and homework was cutting into their family time. An interesting conclusion reached by Beach (1989) is that for women work duties received less priority when tensions arose between family and work.

Conflicts over home and work lives may also occur with partners. This was

evident in Allen and Wolkowitz's (1987) study which found that twelve out of the 90 women interviewed experienced problems between themselves and their spouses, "Some tensions but slight. It gets on my husband's nerves sometimes" (p.130). Costello (1989) also found that homework causes conflict between women homeworkers and their spouse. Costello concluded that conflict occurred for two main reasons: one, some homeworkers had spouses who objected that homework interfered with their wives' availability for companionship; and two, other spouses resented their additional child care responsibilities while women were doing their paid work. This latter finding is interesting because it illustrates how women needed their husbands to take care of the children in order to get their paid work done. This point begins to illustrate the misrepresentation of homework as a means of combining paid work with child care which will be further discussed in the following section.

Costello (1989) illustrated how certain women with young children could integrate their roles of mother and worker and minimize role conflict. For instance, "I don't mind homework...because when I'm home, I can have the laundry going when I am doing my homework" (Costello 1988, 138). Costello notes that for these homeworkers there were sufficient hours when their children were sleeping, playing, or occupied to complete the work. Gerson and Kraut (1988) also discussed the potential for conflict in doing homework versus working outside the home. They found that homeworkers experienced less role conflict and overload than office workers. However, reasons for these results were not elaborated upon.

Boundaries set up within the home can help women separate their roles. Boundaries are referred to as a "...mechanism for establishing role settings (primarily the work space) and reducing role conflict in the home where both occupational and domestic roles are maintained" (Ahrentzen 1990, 727). Common boundaries discussed in the homework literature are spatial; boundaries, that is, having distinct physical boundaries, or psychological boundaries; that is, being able to mentally detach the home from work (Ahrentzen 1990; Christensen 1993). First, I want to turn to maintaining spatial boundaries. If there is no separate room for doing homework, the chance for family and work responsibilities to conflict is heightened especially for female homeworkers with young children (Christensen 1993). Most homes are not designed to accommodate wage-earning work; therefore, when women bring waged work into the home they must establish space where paid work can be done. Unfortunately, according to Allen (1989), women are not likely to have "a room of their own" exclusively for work. In her British study, she found that three-quarters of her sample of homeworkers worked in the kitchen or living room. Madigan et. al's (1990) results are consistent with these findings. They found that homes will more likely have a study room or workroom for men than for women and that more and more children have rooms of their own equipped as study/bedrooms. Women, on the other hand, rarely have any space (and consequently, no work space) they can call their own. The use of space by homeworkers was examined by Miraftab (1996) who compares the (re)structuring of the home by females and male industrial homeworkers. She found different types of modifications in the use of existing space based on the gender of the worker. Women homeworkers tended to set up their

work space within living space to accommodate both domestic and productive work. In contrast, men homeworkers usually appropriated a certain space within the home for production away from other activity. Christensen (1993) notes that women need to create space within the home for paid work. The ideal solution to the dilemma of home and work conflicts would be a home office that has a separate door to the outside, so that clients or workers do not have to come into home at all. Unfortunately, Christensen's study also supported the finding that women rarely have their own office space. In her study, the majority of homeworkers used their bedroom as their room for waged work.

Second, the ability to separate home and work psychologically will also allow women to reduce conflict between home and work roles. If there is no mental separation between home and work, homework becomes extremely exhausting; that is, homework is always present and is continuously surrounding the homeworker (Costello 1988). Individual quotes illustrate the difficulties faced by women who are not able to separate homework from family. For instance, this homeworker claims, "The work was always hanging over your head...I was always exhausted" or in the words of another homeworker, "You can't leave your home-based problems behind" (Costello 1988, 140).

Another homeworker remarks:

You're juggling so many things, and it's constantly there. When you're in an office, the only thing you really do is work. You might think of the house, and say, "Oh God, I've got to cook something for dinner", or "Did I defrost the roast?" But when you get up to go get a soda from the soda machine, that's all you're doing. At home I get up to get a soda, and the refrigerator says, "Better clean me." Or I go to the bathroom and I think, "I better clean that." It's always there, hitting me in the face (Christensen 1993, 63).

The inability to mentally separate their roles creates a constant pressure felt by homeworkers. For instance, if they are working, they are not spending time with their children or cleaning, or if they are with their children they are not working (Christensen 1989). A homeworker from Costello's (1989) study illustrates this dilemma between home and work roles:

The [homework] is always on my mind at home...I think, "Oh , I have that work; I have to get it done." If I could go [out to work], it would be done and I could come home and not think about it. I would just think about work at home. Doing homework is real difficult for me because I think I should be doing homework when I'm doing the laundry and then I think, "no, this come first".

Experiences like these indicate that homeworkers become trapped within a vicious circle of home and work lives.

2.5.3.6 Homework as a Child Care Strategy:

A dominant representation of homework portrayed in the media, public discourse, and through certain literature has been that homework is an ideal strategy for combining child care with waged work (Christensen 1993; Manicom 1994). For instance, certain representations include women working away at their computer with a child playing happily and quietly nearby (Christensen 1993). Research done in this area casts doubt on the effectiveness of combining homework with child care. Christensen (1989) illustrates that the vast majority of clerical homeworkers cannot and do not t children are awake and active. One homeworker who types hospita "Just try and imagine bringing your three year old to work with you of the frustration I face everyday..." (Christensen 1985, cited in

Another homemaker's response illustrates the difficulty of simultaneously doing paid work and child care:

Sometimes Ellen stands at the door and pounds. There are times I am in the middle of a telephone conversation, and it's just not appropriate to put the receiver down and growl at a two-year-old. At that time I try to block out what is going on outside and hope the customer doesn't think I am beating someone...(Christensen 1993, 69).

Interestingly, most homeworkers find themselves trying to fit in periods of work between family responsibilities (Allen and Wolkowitz 1987; Costello 1988; 1989). For instance, Costello's (1988; 1989) study of clerical homeworkers indicates that many homeworkers find themselves working around their children's schedule; that is, some find themselves waking up early in the morning before their children awake or do most of their work when their children go to bed and end up staying up late into the night. The difficulty of combining paid and unpaid roles is recognized in the following quote:

When I get the claims at night, I try to put in an hour while the kids are watching TV. Then I get up at 4:30 A.M. to work before the kids get up...It is easier when nobody is around...During the day, I turn on the TV and tell my preschooler to watch...then, when she takes a nap, I can work (Costello 1988, 138).

What is also quite ironic about the representations of homework as a child care strategy is that many homeworkers continue to pay for child care. Christensen's (1989) study indicated that one out of every two professional and clerical women working at home rely on some help with child care. Of the clerical workers with preschool children, about 17% pay for child care and 19% have their husband or other family members watch the children as they work, and most of the remainder do their work while their children are asleep. The use of child care by homeworkers and the incompatibility of simultaneous

work activities and child care are also reported in Ahrentzen's study (1990). Furthermore, the time women spend with their children does not radically increase (Costello 1988; Christensen 1993). Although being able to spend more time with children was seen by the homeworkers as an advantage offered by homework, in order for homeworkers to complete the work their children had to be at least occupied or ignored. This homeworker sums up the contradiction inherent in doing homework and looking after children:

I feel real bad I took so much time away from the family life...There were playgrounds and there were swimming lessons I would like to have gone to. In the morning, I couldn't go because I was so exhausted from working (Costello 1988, 140).

Another homeworker offers a more realistic assessment of homework as a child care strategy, "The advantage is being able to stay home and the disadvantage [is] not being able to keep up with your parenting responsibilities" (Costello 1989, 205-206).

The interruptions women experience doing homework are also indicative of the difficulties of combining paid work and child care. Costello's (1988) study illustrated that these interruptions ultimately take time away from women's paid work. Costello reports two homeworkers' complaints about simultaneously doing child care and paid work. One stated, "You are working at home with small children...and you are always interrupted for, 'Mommy, can I have a snack? Can I have this?'" (Costello 1988, 139). The second home-based worker underscored the difficulty of balancing paid work and child care, "Contrary to public opinion, it is not easy [to do homework] because you have kids that you have to work around. If children interrupt me, I have to start all over again, and I have to absorb that time" (Costello 1988, 139). These interruptions affect women's paid

work and their daily lives. Time taken away from work may mean less money earned.

Also women may find themselves behind in their paid work as a result of constant interruptions and that they need to put in excessively long hours in order to meet their paid work responsibilities (International Labour Conference 1995). The consequences of constant interruptions for women's paid work is further documented in the proceedings from the homework conference (Manicom 1994, 63), "the double day...becomes the endless day-filled with the constant demands of homework, child care and other responsibilities." Christensen (1993, 62) illustrates the difficulties women face in their work and their daily lives when trying to combine home and work simultaneously:

...the arrangement has its own stresses. In order to get the work finished, she keeps to a grueling schedule. When she first started as a home-based typist Anne worked for an hour in the afternoon while her infant napped, then she prepared dinner, cleaned up, bathed the child and put her to bed, and sat down to work again at seven o'clock in the evening. Spurred by her deadlines, she would work until two or three o'clock in the morning, then get back up at six o'clock to see her husband off and care for her daughter. After six months of getting three or four hours of sleep a night, she quit.

Beach's (1989) study also confirms that the workday for women homeworkers is filled with numerous interruptions. She concluded that female homeworkers face twice as many interruptions to their workday as male homeworkers. And further, the interruptions faced by women are more frequent than men's. Beach maintains that frequent interruptions create a workday for women which is a back and forth interaction between work and family needs and a constant battle for women to meet both demands.

Interestingly, although employers advocate home-based work as a simple solution

for combining child care and waged work findings by both Lozano (1989) and Costello (1988) contradict this representation. In Lozano's review of homework studies she found that some organizations who employ homeworkers require assurance that workers will not be distracted by the needs of children, thus rendering the integration of child care and paid work impossible. Costello (1988) found that the employers were rigid when it came to family matters. For instance, supervisors were tolerant if a sick child prevented a homeworker from processing more than an hour or two of claims, but supervisors expressed irritation if it occurred regularly. Costello further indicated that employers sent home-based workers a memo offering suggestions for the scheduling of household responsibilities around the requirements of homework in order to limit the interruptions to their work. The following section illustrates another common representation of homework.

2.5.3.7 Flexibility and Autonomy in doing Homework:

Various home-based work literature assesses the representation of homework as increasing personal autonomy and enhancing flexibility in balancing the demands of work and family (Costello 1989; Christensen 1993; Allen and Wolkowitz 1987). Ms. Magazine featured an article on homeworking women. They had a woman making a phone call as she lounged in bed. The point of this article claims Lozano (1989) was to illustrate how this homeworker is her own boss, free to decide things for herself. Such representations are used by employers to promote homework as an ideal work option. As Allen (1989, 276) stated:

...employers do not discuss the many advantages homework has for them but rather talk about women choosing to do homework...the flexibility it offers the women, because of “no set hours”, the ability to arrange their work to suit their own convenience...

The flexibility and autonomy offered by doing paid work at home are dubious from assessing home-based work studies. The studies show that the claim that homework offers women flexibility is misleading or as Costello (1989, 213) suggests, “...homework offers an illusionary flexibility.” This was a common finding. For instance, Pennington and Westover (1989,164) conclude that, “The flexibility of homework is that it permits the worker to overwork and to extend her working day way past what is considered reasonable and healthy.” Similarly, Salmi (1996) claims homework is flexible in that it allows women to arrange their own hours of work, but that it simultaneously creates the problem of extending work over the whole day and leads to the difficulty of separating work from leisure time. Consequently, the structure of homework is “more” flexible for women in situations without children. Those who use homework as a means of work-family accommodation find that the flexibility lies in being able to respond to the multiple demands of the home, work, and family needs (Gringeri 1996). The flexibility that is offered in doing homework is, according to Harvey (1989, as cited in Leach 1993), in essence no more than capitalism itself. For instance, “Flexibility has been...ideologically sanctioned in order to permit women to carry the full burden of domestic labour” (Leach 1993, 77). Therefore, flexibility in doing homework is not an advantage of doing homework for all women.

The common result from studies discussing the representation of personal

autonomy when working at home presents a distorted picture of personal work autonomy. Women working at home may be able to set their own time, pace and hours of work, but for most women with domestic responsibilities, these advantages are limited. For instance, many women find that their day is tightly structured around the constant demands of household responsibilities and paid work (Allen and Wolkowitz 1987). Furthermore, many women find that their work is scheduled around family demands, thereby limiting their freedom to independently choose when to do paid work (International Labor Conference 1995; Salmi 1996). Allen and Wolkowitz (1987), Costello (1988), and Beach (1989) confirm that women with children working in the home do not have the degree of autonomy perceived to be offered by working in one's home. As Beach (1989, 86) claims, "...children powerfully affect the course of women's workday..." A homemaker in Costello's (1988, 138) study describes the rigid scheduling of her work:

I would get up at 8:00 A.M., feed the girls, and try to straighten up a little bit...At 11:30, I would feed the kids and then at 12:00, they'd nap. The entire time until 3:30, I would do claims. I'd go for a ride with the kids. At 5:00, we would eat. At 6:00 sharp, my husband would take them downstairs and I would work. At 7:00 P.M., I would stop and get the kids in bed. Then, I would work until 10:30 or 12:30 at night. I was never so drained. It hit and never went away.

Evidently, from the findings female home-based workers with children (the personal autonomy of homeworkers without children were not addressed) do not have the ability to structure their workday freely as a result of child care demands. Consequently, these women have a limited ability to freely set their own hours and pace of work. A homemaker in Costello's (1988, 142) study provides a telling summary of real homework

conditions, “They [employers] make it sound that it is the offer of a lifetime, but after they hire you they are going to squeeze everything out of you and then ask for more.”

2.5.3.8 Degrees of Economic and Social Vulnerability in doing Homework:

Studies indicate that female homeworkers are vulnerable to economic and social consequences. Female homeworkers’ economic and social vulnerability was evident in the literature discussing their wages and benefits. In an examination of self-employed women Nadwodny (1996) found that in Canada, 29% of self-employed women who worked at home full-time earned \$20,000 or more, compared with 44% of those who worked outside the home. The lower earnings of home-based workers is also documented in Kraut and Grambsch’s (1987) study of female homeworkers in the United States who made only 78.3% of the income of non-homeworkers, once the influence of occupation was controlled for. Gerson and Kraut (1988) found that women working at home in the United States in the mid-1980s were half as likely as women working outside the home to receive health benefits, social security contributions, and less likely to have paid vacation leaves. Gerson and Kraut (1988) also concluded that married women compensated for such disadvantages by relying on husbands for benefit coverage. Chamot (1988, 172) summarizes the exploitative conditions of a particular woman working from home:

For the past five years, (Ann) Blackwell has been working at home...as a participant in what Blue Cross calls its “cottage keyers” program...She is paid 16 cents per claim, each of which requires about 90 seconds to process...she nets about \$100--after deductions for taxes and equipment rental charges paid to Blue Cross. That is a 50 hour work week, with no paid vacation time, no paid sick leave, and no fringe benefits.

Costello (1988; 1989) illustrates the changes women clerical homeworkers experience when they move from the office to the home. The wages decrease for homeworkers and their employee benefits are eliminated. It becomes clear that for those home-based employees who moved their workplace to the home, and whose employment status changed to independent contractor, are discriminated against simply because of their work location. This claim is supported by Christensen (1988b, 1989) who argues, "...several corporations practice a form of place discrimination, altering the status of workers when they move from the office to the home."

An interesting justification for the lower wages paid to homeworkers is discussed by Allen and Wolkowitz (1987). They maintain that differences in aptitude, skill, and irregular working patterns due to homeworkers' interruptions as a result of their domestic responsibilities, are used to justify paying female home-based workers lower wages than those working in offices. So, homeworkers are not seen as having the same skill and aptitudes as those working in the office. Furthermore, it is ironic that one of the commonly claimed advantages of homework by employers is its flexibility in allowing women to manage home and paid work (International Labour Conference 1995), and yet homeworkers are penalized in terms of their wages for the interruptions which may occur due to family responsibilities. Further, lower wages indicate a captive labour force who have been forced back into the home and have become hidden into the home sphere (Boris and Daniels 1989; Dangler 1994). This homeworker illustrates how employers have a captive labour force in homeworkers:

They get a lot of work done for little money. And they know that. They are at an advantage because they don't have to pay benefits and they don't have to give any kind of decent raises. The women who stay have to stay and they know they've got them...A lot of these women have no alternative because for what they make, the babysitting is expensive. But the main thing is that being home with the kids is more important than material things (Costello 1988, 142).

Christensen (1989) and Dangler (1994) claim that the employment status of homeworkers increases their vulnerability to low wages, low rates of pay, and lack of benefits. According to both scholars, independent contractors are the most vulnerable group of workers. As Christensen (1989, 189) states in her study of independent contractors:

...contractors trade the dependability of a salary for the undependability of an hourly or piece rate, often with no guarantee as to the number of hours or projects. They make less than they did when they worked in the office, doing the same work. They lose all employee benefits, including health care, pension plans, paid sick leaves, and vacations...

Home-based business owners, on the other hand, have multiple clients and contracting arrangements, and therefore, possess the autonomy to set their own rates according to what the market will bear and to recruit and monitor their flow of work. They basically have direct control over all aspects of their work (Christensen 1989; Dangler 1994). However, both groups of homeworkers are vulnerable, in terms of lack of benefits; that is, independent contractors and self-employed are awarded no employee benefits.

Further, those homeworkers remunerated by piece rate or commission are in situations of increased stress and pressure from doing paid work at home compared to those being paid an hourly wage or by salary. For instance, piece rate is a payment system that creates pressure to earn an income combined with the need to meet targets in terms of

quantity and quality of which are affected by the amount of work needed to be done. This situation is similar to that of the self-employed who depend on profits from the business, and therefore, are under pressure to continuously sell product(s) or find clients (International Labour Conference 1995; Clement and Myles 1994). Self-employed persons also face an inconsistent workload that fluctuates according to demand. This inevitably affects their income because it is also susceptible to fluctuations in demand. As Clement and Myles (1994, 56-57) state about all those self-employed, "Becoming one's own boss...means a shift from the uncertainties of the labour market and paid employment to a different, equally uncertain market place."

2.6 Gaps Found in Existing Home-Based Work Reserach

There were various gaps found in the existing research of female homeworkers. To date, there are few contemporary studies done of home-based work(ers). Home-based work literature and even more so specific research studies focusing on female homeworkers is limited in the 1990s, with the majority of literature dominating during the mid-to late 1980s. Recently, many significant studies of self employment in the home have been undertaken; however, the bulk of this work has concentrated on the male entrepreneur working outside the home. Female self-employed have been neglected as a significant area of research. And, the female self-employed working within the home have been completely neglected (see for example Belcourt et. al 1991). This lack of research is of concern due to the growing number of self-employed women, especially those working from home (Nadwodny 1996; Cohen 1996). There is also little recent research on

independent contractors and home-based employees. Lastly, there is little geographic research dealing with female homeworkers. This is of concern because geographers are in an ideal position to discuss the concepts of space and place which are important in the understanding of homework. Unfortunately, research on such workers has not kept pace with the growing importance of the phenomenon and the knowledge of the female homeworker remains limited. This lack of research is unfortunate because these women's experiences are kept hidden and will continue to be kept hidden as long as researchers continue to ignore this group of paid workers. Research is needed to document the lived experiences of female homeworkers and in the process provide a more realistic assessment of homework's advantages and disadvantages for women. Allen and Wolkowitz (1986, 26) illustrate the need for more research about women working in the home:

Attention to homeworking would contribute to the development of more adequate theories of the processes of production as they articulate with gender, both inside and outside the home. These developments are not possible within a sociology of work developed almost entirely in relation to male employment patterns, or within sociology of the family which characterizes the home in terms of consumption not production.

Although many issues about homework were addressed in the literature, there were many other significant issues which were raised but not thoroughly explored. This was the case for issues such as the changing geographical social and spatial isolation faced by homeworkers, homeworkers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with homework, and the economic and social vulnerability faced by homeworkers. In-depth examination of these issues is necessary in order to understand more fully the experiences of female homeworkers. Further, in order to get a more complete understanding of the issues facing

female homeworkers, the forces shaping the experiences of homework(ers) and the forces shaping those experiences, a more thorough analysis which uses theory to help explain empirical research results is required. Much of the work done to date on home-based work is descriptive; that is, it simply describes trends in empirical data. Why women's experiences are the way they are is important to understand, just as is documenting their lived experiences through descriptive work. However, in my view theoretically based work adds to the critical understanding of homework and provides explanations of some of the social forces/processes shaping the experiences of women homeworkers in a specific time and place. These studies are all examples of descriptive studies (Costello's (1988; 1989; Johnson's 1993; 1996; Christensen's 1988a; 1989; Gerson and Kraut 1988).

Another gap found in the home-based literature was that homeworkers were treated as a homogeneous group of workers and accounts were insensitive to differences between homeworkers. For the majority of studies, distinctions between homeworkers with respect to their specific position, such as whether homeworkers had children and age of children, were not acknowledged. Therefore, the context in which a particular homeworker was experiencing certain homework conditions was not known. This is problematic because women's experiences of home-based vary depending on particular situational factors such as presence or absence of children, age of children, length of time doing paid work, and also homeworkers' class position. These will cause women to have different experiences of home-based work and will help determine the degree to which homework is a progressive or regressive paid work strategy, or a successful or unsuccessful work-family accommodation.

These gaps are evident in a number of the studies reviewed. Studies, such as Allen and Wolkowitz (1987); and Nelson (1988) discuss homeworkers as a uniform group. They fail to distinguish between homeworkers and to consider how their situation may have shaped their homework experience. This was also the case with studies by Ahrentzen (1990) and Johnson (1996) who not only do not distinguish between homeworkers, but do not distinguish between the experiences of home-based work for women as compared to men. This is problematic because the issues faced by women and men doing homework are different. Gerson and Kraut (1988), Christensen (1989); and Costello (1988; 1989) sometimes distinguish between quotes of homeworkers who have children and those who do not, but they do not do this consistently throughout their analyses. For instance, both Christensen (1989) and Gerson and Kraut (1988) summarize homeworkers' reasons without taking into consideration the responses given by women with children, or women without children. Kraut and Grambsch (1987) differentiate between women's and men's situations based on marital status and the impact of having children. They also incorporate the difference race makes in the experiences of home-based work for women and men. Distinctions between homework position were made to a certain degree by Christensen (1989) in her study and Dangler (1994) in her review of home-based literature; however, the majority of the literature failed to make this distinction. Christensen (1988a; 1993) offers a thorough examination of the homeworker's situation and their experiences. As a result, one can relate their experiences to the larger picture of their lives. I am in support of Dangler's (1994) claim that to portray homeworkers as a homogenous group of people with equal chances for a lucrative and

fulfilling work experience is fallacious. It is necessary to contextualize women's experiences of homework in order to understand the social reality within which people exist and out of which they are functioning.

2.7 Summary: Contributions to Home-Based Work Literature

The following study has contributed to the literature of homework(ers) in various ways. This study looks at various aspects of homework. Some of these issues relate to and build on what has been done by previous scholars and other issues that begin to introduce new areas of study in unfolding the experiences of female homeworkers. The aspect of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with homework is looked at in this study. This issue adds to the homework literature by illustrating the (possible) circumstances and/or factors that have played a role in making women either satisfied or dissatisfied with their overall homework experience and why certain factors were not evaluated in women's overall satisfaction/dissatisfaction with homework. This study also adds to what has already been done by illustrating the various reasons given by homeworkers for working at home. However, this study takes this a step further by documenting the reasons for each individual homeworker and by doing so illustrating the different ways and form in which gender relations of power constrain women's decision to work from home. Previous literature has focused on the debate of whether homework is an expression of choice for women. This study takes a different approach to this issue. Because of the social-feminist belief that all choices in society are constrained in some way or form by the organization of power, the question of whether homework is an expression of choice was not a central

focus in this study. Rather, this study adds to the literature by discussing homeworkers' thoughts on the degree of choice they feel they had in deciding to work at home. In this way, we can see how women themselves feel their choice in doing homework was constrained by gender relations of power, as these relations were played out in various ways for women in different circumstances. Further, this study illustrates the inaccuracy of portraying the decision to work at home as the outcome of individual choice. A related issue, minimally discussed in the literature and further looked at in this study is the sacrifices women make to their career in doing homework and how this relates to the larger conditions of doing homework for women.

The geographical social and spatial isolation of doing homework was touched upon only slightly in the homework literature. This study adds to our knowledge about this issue by documenting the specific types of isolation women face in doing homework, and how women try to minimize and/or deal with such difficulties. In the process, I show that this issue is a central concern in women's experience of homework. This contributes to our geographic understanding of homework by illustrating the changing geographical experience women encounter by making the home a site of both paid and unpaid work. This study also contributes to our understanding of the devaluation of homework and of women doing such work. So far, the research has illustrated how women homeworkers experience devaluation by those outside the home, such as friends coming over to visit as a result of people's view of the meaning of the home as a non-work realm. Further, the literature discusses how family members and how some women themselves also devalue their homework. This study documents how homeworkers experience devaluation in the

various ways mentioned and also in other ways, such as through the interruptions to their workday, the continued familial expectations placed on women in the home, and exploitation through unpaid labour or expenses related to their paid work. This study adds to our understanding of homeworkers by examining the strategies used in dealing with interruptions to women's paid work. This analysis allows us to see how women homeworkers are able to modify their homework conditions and resist devaluation of their work. The issue of gender division of labour is also discussed in this study. Past studies have illustrated how women continue to be primarily responsible for domestic work and for some their unpaid demands actually increase by doing homework. This study adds to these findings; however, takes a different approach to the issue in that it discusses how women try to renegotiate their domestic responsibilities in order to do paid work in the home. New insights into the success of this renegotiation in reducing women's share of domestic work or the consequences of not being able to renegotiate are discussed. This issue is important in furthering our understanding of the geographical aspect of place discrimination.

The issue of work space was discussed in the literature as one of the boundaries within the home that can help women separate their home and work lives. This study further builds on this insight by: one, looking at and illustrating the extent to which women are able to (re)structure their home space in order to accommodate economic activity and balance productive and reproductive work; and two, illustrating the importance of having one's own work space in affecting women's experience with doing homework. This issue of work space is important in advancing our geographical understanding of homework by

showing how women are able to appropriate space within the home to try to facilitate paid work in the home and in the process change the geography of the home space. This study also differs from past studies and opens up a new area of concern, by looking at the geographical question of how the meaning of place (the home) changes with the incorporation of paid work into the realm of home life and as the home becomes the central space in women's worlds. This study also advances our knowledge of female homeworkers by documenting in greater detail the everyday experiences of women trying to manage/struggle their roles as they are manifested in domestic spaces. In particular, this study shows the interaction which takes place between home and work lives for various homeworkers and the conflict which results as their roles interact. This study looks in greater detail to the two common representations portrayed of homework, such as that homework is an ideal child care strategy, and shows how not all women's experiences conform to such representations of homework and in actuality cause difficulties for women trying to do paid work in the home. Lastly, this study contributes to discussions of the economic and social vulnerability women face in doing homework through low wages and lack of benefits.

All these specific aspects discussed above help build on and add to both the interdisciplinary and geographical literature on homework and in the process help to advance our knowledge of female homeworkers and their experience of homework. In discussing how this study builds on previous work, it is also necessary to discuss methodological contributions. The methods used in the previous literature varies. The in-depth interviewing technique used in this study was similar to methods used in only

certain studies (Costello 1988; 1989; Allen 1983; 1989; Beach 1989). The one main methodological contribution of this study is that of feminist methodology to the study of homework(ers). Unlike other home-based work studies, some of which say little about their methodology, this study gives readers an account of the nature of knowledge, the purpose of research, what feminist research is, how I went about finding the women and the difficulties involved, the specifics of the interviews, such as where they took place, the process of data analysis, and specific themes covered and why. These issues are examined in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter Two endnotes

[1] Ahrentzen uses this definition to refer to professional homeworkers in her study. I use this definition to refer to homeworkers on a general level and not simply to a specific type of homeworker.

[2] For the purpose of this study, homework position refers to whether the homeworker is self-employed, an independent contractor, or a home-based employee.

[3] Christensen does not specify the exact amount of time home-based employees spend in the office.

[4] Independent contractors are not recognized in the data numbers; however, I want to point out that they may have been placed under the same category as self-employed for these workers may consider themselves self-employed, but as Christensen stated their position is much more ambiguous.

[5] For the most part, this section discusses literature pertaining specifically to issues of concern for this study and to the three main homework positions involved in "new" forms of homework; however, at times I do discuss literature pertaining to industrial type homework which brings up significant issues of concern relating to this study. Further, certain literature which focused on both women and men working in the home is discussed; however, this literature focused on a larger sample of women than men and brought up significant issues of concern. The study by Johnson (1996) does not indicate the exact number of women or men who participated. This study is examined however because certain issues of concern were discussed in this study. Consequently, some caution should be used in interpreting the findings of this study. Studies, such as Olson (1988) which undertook a demographic survey in two trade magazines which targeted a random sample of 5000 computer professionals and personal computing for general professionals was largely based on a male sample (84% versus 16% of a female sample). This study did raise issues of concern for this study, such as the reasons for working at home, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with homework, and the advantages/disadvantages of working at home; however, the results are biased by the dominance of males in the sample.

[6]The literature chosen for this review was based on studies which related to the central focus of this research. The relevant literature was identified through a comprehensive literature search of studies in the United States, Canada and Britain. Also, the criteria for literature selection was: (a) whether the literature related to the specific types of homeworkers and to the “new” forms of homework relevant to this study; and (b) whether the literature (although the literature may not directly relate to criteria (a), for instance, it may be mainly concerned with female industrial workers (Allen 1983; Allen and Wolkowitz 1987), raised related issues which I felt were significant in understanding the lived experiences of female homeworkers.

[7]This general literature of home-based work does not focus on a specific study, but rather discusses specific aspects of homework or reviews other literature on homework.

[8]For the purpose of this study, Christensen refers to white-collar workers as home-based professionals, managerial, clerical, technical, and sales.

[9]Christensen does not state the number of women in her study and it is not clearly stated whether this study was part of her larger study of white-collar workers.

[10]For a definition of professional homeworker refer back to the discussion of definitions of homeworkers. Ahrentzen’s definition of what constitutes a professional homeworker for her study is discussed.

[11]There are other geographic studies (see for example, Pratt and Harris 1993) which look at homeworkers, but only in a minimal way. Therefore, it is not the focus of attention in this specific section which solely reviews the geographic literature which specifically focuses on studies done of female homeworkers.

[12]Housework in this study refers to meal preparation, meal clean-up, and cleaning and laundry, it does not refer to time spent by women on child care. Nevertheless, women active in paid work find themselves spending roughly double the time on child care spent by their spouses (Statistics Canada 1994).

[13]For the purpose of this study, domestic responsibilities refers to both child care and household responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In doing feminist research, there is no one appropriate research method. Qualitative methods are no more feminist than quantitative methods. Further, the methods used in doing feminist research vary according to the purpose of research and the type of data needed by the researcher (McDowell 1988). Therefore, it is not simply the methods used which make research feminist, rather what is necessary in order to do feminist research is that in whatever method used:

...they need to be guided by concepts and analytic frameworks that can generate woman-centred knowledge, allow discovery of what it is to be a woman in a particular place and time, and what interests and concerns they have...We need to examine our own assumptions, our own part in the research process, and the ethics of our research. That is, the circumstances surrounding data collection and analysis (Dyck 1993, 53, 56-57)

Therefore, when doing research it is imperative for all researchers to clearly account for why the research is being done and how various decisions are made regarding such things as respondent selection, methods used, and data interpretation techniques.[1] Furthermore, it is necessary to clearly account for who is being researched. Such aspects of doing research have been ignored in much non-feminist research to date. The importance of clearly accounting for such decisions is that:

Deciding how the research will be done and who or what will be studied entails making choices. These choices often incorporate assumptions which the researcher takes for granted, such as who is important to study, what

context of research is identified, what data gathering method is best and who is most qualified to engage in research (Kirby and McKenna 1989, 42).

Geographers have recently been reminded of such important matters in doing research (Baxter and Eyles 1995). The purpose of this chapter is to document the research methods and skills used in this study and to account for why such decisions were made. In this chapter then, I first examine what doing feminist research involves and then I move on to a discussion of various principles of feminist research and how I dealt with them in this study. Furthermore, in this chapter I undertake the challenge of accounting for how the research is being done and who is being researched.

3.2 Feminist Research Methodology

Feminist researchers, Kirby and McKenna (1989) argue that research methodologies are more than a set of tools for doing research. Methodologies carry with them their own underlying assumptions which inevitably shape the way information is gathered and the way knowledge is produced. Feminist research methodology aims to serve the interests of dominated, exploited, and oppressed groups, in particular women, who have been and continue to be marginalized by the research process and by what counts as knowledge. In the process, it aims to expand the understanding of the actual experiences of women. And in doing so, it replaces those experiences that have been distorted and falsely constructed in the past with a grounded understanding of women's everyday existence. This study attempted to meet these aims by contributing to knowledge about female home-based workers by documenting their lived experiences in

their own words.

A feminist research methodology is important to this study and to other studies which seek to change the way knowledge is/was created and the way research is/was conducted. "Knowledge is power" and consequently, those people in positions of creating knowledge and in the process able to manufacture ideas can situate these ideas as the "truth" (Kirby and McKenna 1989). As a result of the relative absence of women in positions of power, the political process of knowledge creation is still very much the domain of white, middle and upper class males who command the positions of authority thereby, "put[ting] a monopoly on the creation of certain kinds of knowledge" (Kirby and McKenna 1989, 27). This has resulted in women's experiences being either ignored or distorted by the male-centred ideology of what constitutes worthy data and facts. Women's experiences have been further ignored or distorted by traditional hegemonic research methodology, such as positivism, which accepts there is only one true reality and, "...that research is capable of representing everyone equally because it is done in an objective, non-involved manner..." (Kirby and McKenna 1989, 16). This positivist approach to research has been challenged:

They [women and people from various oppressed groups] say that in fact research has not been objective and that it does not represent their experience. Rather, they argue, research and knowledge are produced in a manner which represents the political and social interests of a particular dominant group. They point out that research has often been a tool of domination which has helped perpetuate and maintain current power relations of inequality (Kirby and McKenna 1989, 16-17).

There are no specific agreed upon research procedures for doing research from a feminist perspective. As Stanley and Wise (1993, 174) assert:

We might provide a series of pointers and exemplars for ‘doing feminist research’ which would add up to a recipe for other women to follow, but we’re suspicious of other people’s attempts to specify what, exactly, ‘research’ should be, and feel that other people should rightly be suspicious of any similar attempt by us.

Further, women’s experiences are researched and analyzed based on principles which vary between scholars throughout feminist research literature (see for example Stanley and Wise 1993; McKenna and Kirby 1989; Reinharz 1992). In deciding on specific research approaches for this study, I was influenced by McKenna and Kirby’s (1989, 17) statement that, “In researching from the margins we are concerned with how research skills can enable people to create knowledge that will describe, explain, and help change the world in which they live.” Three particular feminist research principles shaped this study of female homeworkers. They are: one, accounting for the researcher’s personal experience and situated knowledge in doing research; two, minimizing the unequal power relations in the research process; and three, including the voices of “others”. The following is a review of these three guiding principles.

3.2.1 Placing the Personal within the Research:

In conducting feminist research, the researcher must recognize that she or he is an integral and vital part of the research. As Kim England (1994, 84) notes, “...the researcher is an instrument in her/his research...” She then goes on to state, “The researcher cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork *is* personal” (p.85). I believe that in doing research a relationship between researcher and researched is inevitable. In establishing this relationship, the presence of

the researcher as a person is necessary. Therefore, unlike positivist research which does research in an objective, non-involved manner, research from the margins allows for the researcher to be involved without having her/him hidden from the research process. Thus, the researcher is more than an “instrument of data collection” (Patton 1990, 461).

A researcher’s positionality influences the research process. A researcher brings thoughts, aspirations, feelings, politics, and her/his own gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, occupation, family background, and schooling to the study. All these factors influence the nature and direction of the study, the questions asked, how the research is conducted, how the lives of those researched are interpreted, how the theoretical framework is developed, and the assumptions/concerns brought to the research.

I want to point out the importance of accounting for “situated knowledges” and in the process resisting the traditional epistemological strategy which does not acknowledge the influence of a researcher’s particular location on research and analysis. Who you are and your experiences in the world; that is, your assumptions and politics, are developed from your position, such as being white, middle class and heterosexual. However, although one’s assumptions and identity politics are developed from one’s positionality in society there is not a simple connection between being and identity politics. That is, one’s identity politics are not simply a product of one’s whiteness, middle-classness, rather one’s identity politics also comes from experience. Consequently, not all white, middle class, heterosexual women will have the same politics, rather we all have different lived and personal experiences which inevitably influences one’s identity politics and in the process

the construction of knowledge. Therefore, I am in agreement with McDowell (1993b, 310) who stated:

... 'partial' or 'situated knowledges' recognize that the positionings of white British women in the academy, to take but one example, are not the same as those of other women, women from different ethnic or class backgrounds, and that this makes a difference to knowledge construction.

Therefore, we needed identity politics, so that different types of feminists could carve out space to talk about difference. However, an identity politics claiming that groups such as blacks, lesbians, and middle class women would all have the same politics, has been problematic. So feminism has moved away from essentialist identity politics towards a more sophisticated politics of location, recognizing that where we are in the world in relation to others matters, but it is not all that does. Further, in recognizing "situated knowledges" I am aware of the partiality of this knowledge and how it is situated in a particular place and time or as Hanson and Pratt (1995, 25) claim, "Positions are not static."

I understand that I cannot give a full account of my positionality; however, I offer a few ways in which my positionality influenced the course of this study and in doing so put the knowledge created from this study in a "situated context". I am a 24 year old, single, able-bodied, heterosexual woman. I was born in Canada and I come from an Italian background. My Roman Catholic family is comprised of my mother and father and two older brothers. I come from a middle class background, with my father being self-employed and my mother being a homemaker. My formal education includes a

Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography and at the time of the research I was working on my Masters degree in Geography.

I believe research is about increasing our understanding of an issue, shedding new light on an experience, and allowing people's stories to be illuminated. In undertaking this study of female homeworkers, I felt I would be meeting these research aims. For instance, doing this study will increase our understanding of what doing paid work in the home means for women, it will shed light on their experience, and it will allow their stories to be portrayed. This study was also influenced by my long-term interest in women and paid work. Drawing on past research experience from a study I did of women and the banking industry, I would be able to contribute to knowledge concerning another group of women workers.

I have not been in the position of juggling domestic and paid work roles in the home; therefore, I approached homework from an outsider's vantage point. In approaching this study my ideas were influenced by both general readings on homework and feminist geography studies and my position as a geographer. For instance, I believed that homework was not all that it was made out to be, and that women's experiences of working at home would differ according to situational factors, such as whether or not children were present. Furthermore, studies in feminist geography (see for example Mackenzie 1988, 1989; Christensen 1993; Pratt and Hanson 1993; Dyck 1990) flagged certain issues I wanted to pursue, such as the reorganization of home space to accommodate economic activity and changes in women's geographical isolation, both with

respect to women and work on a general level, and more specifically women and home-based work.

My training as a geographer influenced the present study. Christensen (1993), in her study of home-based female workers, looked at home-based work as a way of eliminating the journey to work. However, I felt that other geographical aspects of home-based work needed to be further emphasized and explored. For instance, I became interested in how the home as a site of paid work affects conditions of women's work. I was also interested in how women (re)structure their social/spatial environment in order to do paid work from the home. Further, I wanted to know how women experience the geographical social/spatial isolation associated with being located in the home. And lastly, I wanted to explore how the meaning of the home, as a place of family life changed as a result of homework (these geographical issues and others were discussed in greater detail in Chapter One).

My commitment to feminism influenced the course of this study. This study was influenced by the particular feminist principles outlined above, and discussed further in the following sections. Further, my aim in doing such research was to contribute to the task described by Maria Mies (1983, 123) that "Research which so far has been largely the instrument of dominance and legitimation of power elites, must be brought to serve the interests of dominated exploited and oppressed groups."

3.2.2 Power Relations in doing Research:

The research relationship between the researcher and the participants is inherently

hierarchical. This is the result of the unequal power relations that guide the research encounter whereby the researcher is constructing knowledge from other people. Further, the researcher is probing into the lives of certain people and is at risk of being intrusive and potentially exploitative. In this study I aimed to reduce the power imbalance between myself and the women participants. I did not try to remove the power imbalance because I agree with Kim England's (1994, 86) argument that, "Reflexivity *can* make us more aware of asymmetrical exploitative relationships, but it cannot remove them." My goal in reducing the power imbalance that exists between the researcher and the researched was to shift as much power as possible over to the researched through the research process.

Just as the participants' lives, feelings, and understandings became central to the research, I felt that making known to the women who I am and where I come from (my situated position) would help to overcome the power imbalance. Greed's (1990) approach to dealing with unequal power relationships in her study of women quantity surveyors clearly illustrates the means by which I tried to reduce the balance of power in the present study:

I do not attempt to keep my surveyors at arm's length and do research 'on' them as my subjects whilst maintaining a dominant position, as is common in much traditional 'objective' research. I see my research as a two-way process of interaction and sharing between myself and the other women. In particular, in trying to encompass both the professional and personal elements of their lives in my research, I need to be willing to give as well as take. If I expect women to tell me what their lives are really like at a personal level, they expect that in return I will share with them information about my personal likes and feelings (Greed 1990, 145).

I feel it is just as important to expose/share the partiality of the researcher's perspective with those being studied (England 1994).

The participants' position was one where I allowed them as much control over the research process as possible. The relationship was one where the respondents were made aware prior to the fieldwork, through the initial telephone call and in person on the day of the interview, that I depended on them for information and guidance concerning their experience of home-based work. I did not enter the field thinking that I had superior knowledge of home-based work(ers) because I lacked personal experience of homework. Rather, I made them aware that the knowledge they have on this issue is much greater than mine and I am the one learning from their experiences. Although I had specific themes to cover in the interviews, women in the study were encouraged to introduce issues they felt were important during the course of the interview. This allowed the participants to have more of a part in the research than simply being respondents during the interview process and help break the distinction between researcher (the one who asks questions) and researched (the ones whose lives are being exposed). As a researcher, I wanted to be more than an instrument of data collection, so I saw the interviews as a conversation whereby the researcher and the participants shared information and contributed to the research (Oakley 1981, as cited in Kirby and McKenna 1989). Women were also told they had the right to refrain from answering any question(s) they did not feel comfortable answering, that they could omit any part of the discussion they did not want used in the study, that they could ask me questions at any time, that they could end the interview at any time, that the tapes produced would be destroyed upon completion of the study, and that a summary of the findings would be given to all women.

3.2.3 Including the Voices of “Others”:

When deciding to study female home-workers I became concerned with how I could conduct research with integrity by representing “other” women’s voices in the research. When deciding on the type of female homeworkers I would interview, I tried to minimize the differences between myself and the researched by focusing on the experiences of female, able-bodied, and heterosexual home-based workers. Minimizing the differences was done because of my sensitivity to the representation of “other” women. I feel researchers can do research concerning “other” women, but that by minimizing the differences between themselves and “other” women the potential for the participants (and myself included) to feel uncomfortable, awkward, and held back in the research process can be minimized. Nevertheless, differences between myself and the respondents were evident and varied for each woman. The main difference was that I was not a home-based worker. Other differences were evident in marital status, age, class, and ethnic/racial background; therefore, I needed to assess how well I could represent the voices of these “other” women.

How were the differences between myself and the participants dealt with in this study? It has been argued (see for example Kobayashi 1994) that researchers should move away from doing research on “other” people not like themselves. As Kobayashi (as cited in Chouinard and Grant 1995, 159) argues:

Political ends will be achieved only when representation is organized so that those previously disempowered are given voice. In other words, it matters that women of colour speak for and with women of color.

I do not agree entirely with Kobayashi. I agree, for example, that a heterosexual female researcher in academia doing a study of lesbians cannot fully understand and represent their experiences because the researcher does not know what it means to be a lesbian. I do believe however, there is a way of overcoming doing research on “others”. In studying other people it is necessary to recognize that researchers cannot speak for “others” but can and must speak *out* for “others”. Accordingly, England (1994, 87) states in her discussion of doing research with lesbians:

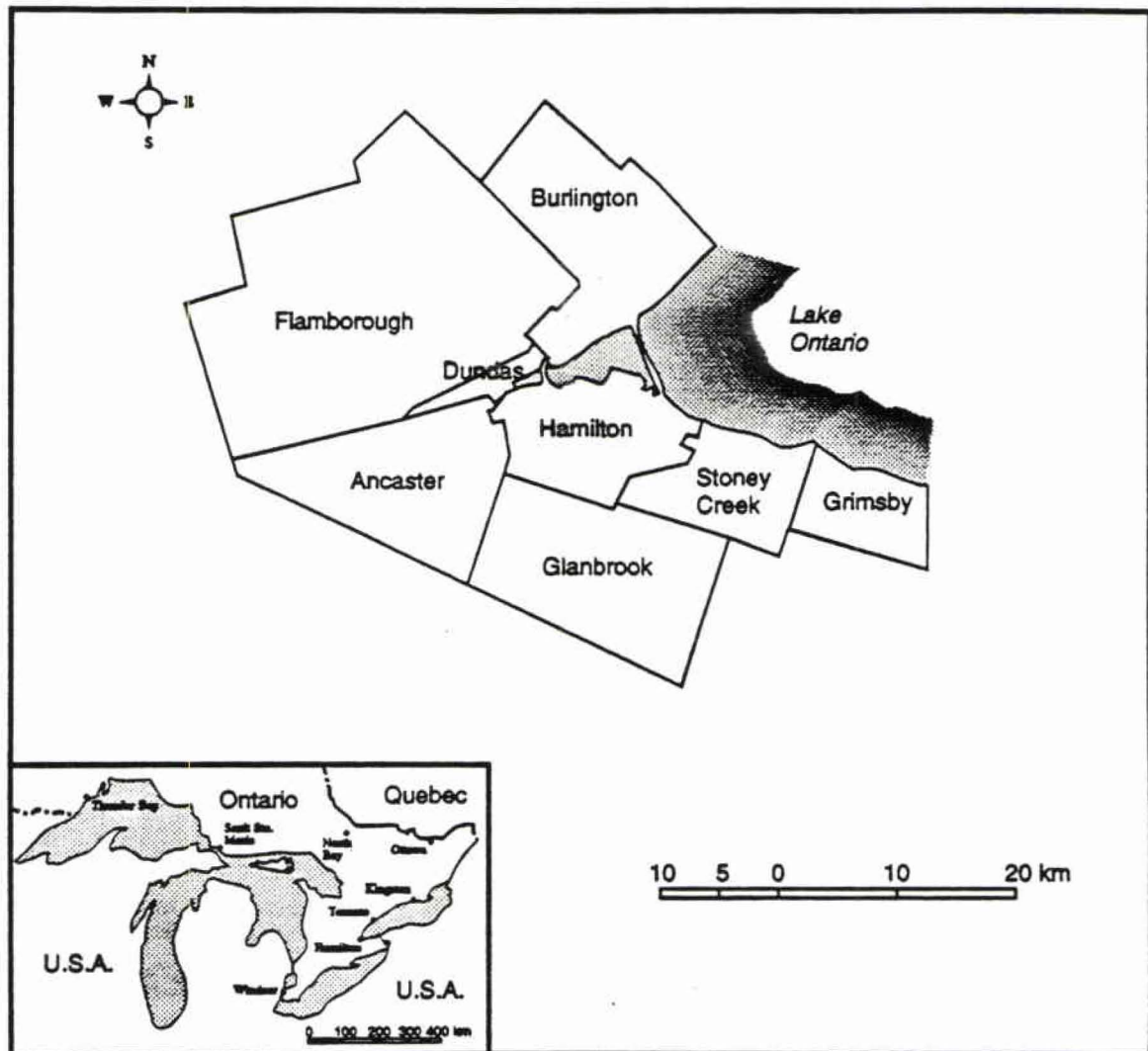
So, should I decide to pursue my research project on the lesbian community, it will be in the full knowledge that I cannot speak for them and not myself. What I will be studying is a world that is already interpreted by people who are living their lives...

Similarly, in doing this present study, I do not intend to speak on behalf of homeworkers, rather I am doing such a study in order to speak out for homeworkers, who may not on their own have the opportunity to do so. Researching “others” is an issue that needs to be dealt with by all, otherwise, as Chouinard (Chouinard and Grant 1995) argues political progress, or changing power structures and oppression in society would not occur if all privileged workers decided not to document issues such as poverty, and homelessness. What is needed is greater sensitivity to differences and issues of voice.

3.3 The Site and the Sample

The sample of women homeworkers was drawn from Hamilton, Dundas, Ancaster, Burlington, and Mississauga (see Figure 3.1).[2] When beginning this study, the main site I chose was Hamilton for the simple reason that it is close to my place of residence and participants would be easily accessible. However, shortly after beginning the recruitment

Figure 3.1: The Site Location



(Source: Grant 1996)

of the homeworkers, I realized I would have to extend the study area because of the difficulty encountered in finding the women (these difficulties are discussed below). Therefore, difficulties in the recruiting of the homeworkers influenced the final study area from which the sample was drawn. The geographic region that the sample was drawn from may bias the study in particular ways. For instance, recruiting women solely from urban areas may not capture those women living in more isolated, rural environments. Therefore, other conditions under which homeworkers are doing homework may not be included.

The sample for the present study consisted of a total of 20 female home-based workers. This particular sample size was chosen because in-depth information from a small number of women was needed for this study rather than general information from a larger group. A small sample such as this is suitable for a qualitative, non-representative study of the multiple ways women experience homework. Further, in the case of this research, my main objective is not to generalize to all homeworkers but to examine some of the relations and processes shaping women's experience of homework in a particular time and place. Also, my primary goal is different from the one of generalizing in that by focusing on 20 female homeworkers I want to provide a framework of some the inequalities which give rise to certain processes or relations.

For this study, a purposeful sampling strategy was used. This strategy is useful because it emphasizes the search for "information-rich cases" or where attention is directed to particular informants in the initial stages of the research process because these cases will illuminate the study. Various recruiting techniques aimed at identifying

“information rich cases” were implemented in this study (these techniques are discussed below).

I began the recruitment of participants at the end of May 1996. My initial selection criteria for the participants were: one, being white, able-bodied, and heterosexual [3]; two, doing service, clerical, and sales work within the confines of the home; and three, being company employed and doing the majority of work at home. I began by contacting (through phone, faxes, and letters) various financial institutions, insurance agencies, telephone companies, and various other corporations. Most of the contacts were to the head offices in the Toronto area. I also contacted agencies, such as the Ontario Federation of Labour, Public Service Alliance of Canada, and Workers Information and Action Centre, who referred me to the various corporations employing homeworkers, or to other people who could be of help in my study. These particular agencies were contacted because their names were listed in homework literature. Further, various freelance writers were contacted who have written articles about home-based workers. These writers also referred me to various corporations and/or other people involved in related work who might be able to help in my search. When in contact with the corporations employing homeworkers, I asked if I could be put in touch with these women or vice versa. My request was refused by most corporations. The reasons for denying my request were either: one, for the simple reason that, “We (the financial institution contacted) will not be able to participate in your study at this time” (cited by a manager of a financial institution) (this reason was similar to those given by other corporations); or two it is an invasion of employee privacy to give out such information

(although I mention that the employees themselves can contact me if they were willing to participate). At this time I began to despair, especially after a woman working at a legal clinic who has done some work on women and home-based cautioned me about doing such a study. She “warned” me that I would have to offer the women a least a minimum pay of \$10 an hour for participating, a support group for the women, and that in order to do such a study “effectively” I need at least a budget of \$30,000.

It was now July and I had only two participants. I had no choice but to change the recruitment technique, the specific types of homeworkers I was looking to interview, and the study region. I employed other recruiting techniques, such as personal references, placing advertisements in local newspapers and a local flyer that was distributed to most major restaurants and coffee shops, and posting flyers around McMaster University campus and various women’s organizations. Other women were recruited using the “snowball method” of locating participants via other participants. I also revised my selection criteria. I decided to change the specific homework position to also include home-based self-employed women and independent contractors and other types of work, such as managerial. It was at this time when I changed my study area to Hamilton and the surrounding regions and decided not to go further north than Burlington.

These changes proved successful. Approximately 33 potential participants were first contacted by telephone where I discussed my study and what it involved. There were a few women who did not meet the selection criteria. I sent the other participants an explanatory letter (Appendix 1) that discussed my study in more detail and outlined terms of confidentiality for the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to all

women. No names or any identifying characteristics, such as place of employment, would be associated with any information they provided. In order to ensure anonymity, names and any other identifying characteristics (such names of previous or present employers) of the women have been altered throughout the study with minimal change to the context and meaning of the participant's experience. After sending out this letter, there were those homeworkers who did not agree to participate. They mentioned that they were either too busy or not comfortable taking part in the study. Interviewing began in early August while recruiting of participants continued. By early September I had a confirmed sample of 20 homeworkers.[4]

I want to identify some of the more important biases of the sampling techniques used in this study. According to Baxter and Eyles (1995) conducting creditable research is enhanced by respondent selection procedures. In using a purposeful sampling strategy self-selection biases are inevitably present. Those women contacted through advertisements may have helped “self-select” women who were especially unsatisfied or satisfied about their homework situation, and therefore felt they had something significant to say. In other words, my sample may capture the “extremes” and miss those whose experiences are more in the “middle” or contradictory - both good and bad. Personal contacts and “snowballing” may have biased the sample toward women of similar socioeconomic backgrounds and homework occupations. Consequently, this study may exclude homeworkers with less power over their working conditions than women in this study had. Certain biases may arise also from the characteristics of the women in this sample. Because the women are white (with the exception of one woman), heterosexual,

and able-bodied, the experiences reported pertain only to homeworkers with these specific characteristics. Consequently, certain homework experiences are missing from this study, for instance, the study does not document homework experiences of disabled women, which raise various other significant issues which need attention and which do not necessarily arise in the experiences of able-bodied homeworkers.

The sample of homeworkers for the study is a diverse one. Of the 20 women, ten women “self-defined” themselves as self-employed, five were independent contractors, and five were home-based employees. The women worked in a variety of occupations ranging from service, clerical, and sales, to lower level management. Table 3.1 illustrates the homework position and the various types of paid work being done in the home by each of the women.[5] The sample included women with children, women without children, married women, single divorced women, and women in a variety of occupations. The ages of the women ranged from early thirties to mid-fifties, and their formal education varied from secondary education to post-secondary education. The years the women had worked at home ranged from seventeen years to four months from the time of the interview. Table 3.2 provides a brief description of the informant’s age, marital status, number and age of children, education, and years working from home.

The class positions of the participants were difficult to classify because not all people can be perfectly situated into a particular class position. The main criterion which I used in classifying the class position of the women is that of a socialist definition of class based on control and power over the labour process. Control is based on the extent

Table 3.1: Homework Positions and Occupations

Participant	Homework Position	Occupation
1	independent contractor	research consultant
2	self-employed	vice president of own company
3	self-employed	graphic designer
4	self-employed	operates day care
5	home-based employee	monitor for a telephone line
6	self-employed	artist, teaches art classes, sells frames
7	independent consultant	consultant for a company that sells candles and candleholders
8	home-based employee	operations project manager for telephone company
9	independent contractor	manager for cosmetics company
10	home-based employee	day care provider
11	independent consultant	senior sales director for cosmetics company
12	home-based employee	project manager for products and service development for telephone company
13	self-employed	administrator for company
14	self-employed	child birth educator and labour support service
15	home-based employee	underwriter assistant for insurance company
16	self-employed	medical transcriber
17	self-employed	president of own company
18	independent representative	sales director for company
19	self-employed	bookkeeper/accountant
20	self-employed	designs/decorates clothing

Table 3.2: Description of Participants

Participants	Ages	Marital Status	# of children at home	Age of Children	Education	Years working at home (at time of interview)
1. Mary	32	married	1	20 months	2 B.Sc. and an MBA	approx. 3 years
2. Nicole	41	married	3	8,7,5	college diploma in nursing	1 year, 7 months
3. Sue	34	married	1	3.5	some college, some university	15 years
4. Jennifer	39	married	2	6,8	Masters degree	7 years
5. Rosa	37	married	2	15, 15 months	2.5 years of college nursing	4 years
6. Irene	50	married	0		high school	10 years
7. Linda	40	married	3	9,6,3	university degree	approx. 3 years
8. Katy	43	married	0		college diploma	over a year
9. Terry	30	married	0		one year university	11 years
10. Rhonda	53	divorced	1	22	high school	8 years
11. Elysa	40	married	1	21	high school	17 years
12. Rita	35	married	2	1,2,5	university degree	approx. 1 year
13. Laura	35+	married	3	10,4,2	college	3 years
14. Jessica	45	divorced	8	7,10,13,16,18,19,21,22	college courses	12-15 years
15. Anne	40	married	0		high school	4 months
16. Carla	35	married	3	12,7,6	college courses	4.5 years
17. Lynn	37	married	2	11,9	university degree	approx. 8 years
18. Julie	37	married	3	12,10,8	college diploma	10 years
19. Carol	mid 30s	married	4	13,11,7,3	college courses	2 years
20. Tania	45	married	2	14,9	university degree	approx. 6 years

of control one has over one's conditions of labour. The amount of power the worker has over the labour process is based on the degree to which they can control their wages, and the means of production. The women in this study occupy three class positions. First, the *petite bourgeoisie*, sometimes referred to as the old middle class, who are independent entrepreneurs. They control the means of production, but are vulnerable to fluctuations in economic demand and conditions of production, and exchange and have no significant command of labour outside their homes, although they may have two or fewer employees (Clement and Myles 1994). Second, the modern *petite bourgeoisie* or the new middle class which includes lower level management and technical experts who have no "real" economic ownership over the means of production. But, they have indirect administrative influence over the labour process through strategic decision making power with respect to production delegated by senior managers and executives. Like other workers (or members of the working class), they have little control over their own conditions of labour, since they are employed and are compelled to sell their labour power to capitalist. This class does, however, have significant control over the labour power of others on behalf of capital. The third class position has less power than the independent entrepreneurial and lower managerial classes. This is the working class which lacks control over the means of production, the labour power of others, and command over its own means of realizing its labour (for example, their working conditions). This class is similar to the modern *petite bourgeoisie* which sells its labour power in exchange for a wage. This conceptualization of class structure is consistent with Clement and Myles' (1994) classification. Table 3.3

Table 3.3: Class Positions of Participants

Participant	Class Position
1	working class
2	petite bourgeoisie
3	petite bourgeoisie
4	working class
5	working class
6	petite bourgeoisie
7	working class
8	modern petite bourgeoisie
9	working class
10	working class
11	working class
12	modern petite bourgeoisie
13	working class
14	petite bourgeoisie
15	working class
16	working class
17	petite bourgeoisie
18	working class
19	petite bourgeoisie
20	petite bourgeoisie

illustrates the women's class positions in terms of the class they are most closely associated with based on the above criteria. [6]

3.4. Qualitative Methods: The In-Depth Interview

Methods used in feminist research are not necessarily qualitative as opposed to quantitative. Feminists have not claimed qualitative fieldwork as the only appropriate means of conducting feminist research (Reinharz 1992; Dyck 1993). I propose that the specific data used in research is not what makes the research feminist, rather what is of importance is whether it will contribute to the feminist agenda of creating woman centered knowledge, making radical social changes for women, and creating policies and practices for women which combat women's oppression (Stanley and Wise 1993). In the case of this research, qualitative methods were necessary for these reasons. First, to allow one to gather descriptive data on the lives of participants in the respondents' own words. Second, to enable one to document the lives and activities of women through an understanding of their experiences, from their own point of view, and in their own context. Third, to give women a voice which has been for so long either ignored or distorted.

3.5 Data Collection

In-depth interviews were the main technique used for data collection. The interview method used was the interview guide approach. An interview guide serves as a basic checklist of thematic topics and questions that are to be explored in the course of each interview (Berg 1989), but it allowed myself and participants to diverge from the specified themes and discuss other issues which homeworkers felt important. This

particular interview approach met the following requirements. First of all, this interview method has a degree of both flexibility and structure. I wanted the interview process to be sensitive to individual and situational differences between the women. Because the participants in this study are not a uniform group of homeworkers, the questions asked of each woman were modified according to their specific situation; in other words I tailored the interviews to the woman being interviewed. For example, the guide had a section that dealt with child care. If the woman had no children I disregarded this section. Therefore, this guide provided a general framework where situated questions were developed and not all issues or themes pertained to each homeworker. I wanted the interview to remain as interactive as possible so that women were able to bring up other issues of concern. At the same time, it was also important that participants be given an opportunity to address as many key research themes and issues as time permitted,[7] so that there was sufficient consistency in interviewing to determine how common a particular concern or theme was amongst the women. The guide contains a set of questions (which were elaborated upon in the interview), yet it allowed for other issues to emerge during the interview that were not listed on the interview guide. Since I aimed to explore women's experiences of home-based work from the participants' point of view, I told the women to introduce other issues that seemed important to them at any time throughout the interview. This allowed the input of the research participants to guide and shape the research interaction.

The guide produced for this study identified specific issues and themes of interest which influenced the questions asked. This interview guide is presented in Appendix 2. Certain themes and issues were derived from reading the home-based work literature and

this ensured important bases were covered. Also, themes were developed from personal interests which arose after becoming familiar with the homework literature. The issues or themes were placed in a logical sequential order, but were not expected to necessarily remain in this order throughout the course of the interview. Follow-up interviews were conducted with only a few women in cases where certain issues needed clarification or further discussion. Follow-up interviews were conducted either over the phone or through a letter.

The interviews took place from the beginning of August to mid-September 1996 and were an average of one hour. The majority of the interviews were conducted at the women's homes and a few were conducted at other locations of their choice, such as a park, or a coffee shop. Prior to commencing the interview, the women were given a consent form to sign which reminded them of the terms of confidentiality for the study and the measures to ensure their anonymity. The consent letter also informed them of other details, such as that they had the right to refrain from answering any question(s) that they did not feel comfortable answering, that they could omit any part of the discussion they did not want used in the study, that they could end the interview at any time, and that they could ask me questions. These steps were taken in order to make participants feel comfortable by making sure they felt they had some control over the situation. I agree with Kirby and McKenna (1989, 101) who claim that, "[r]esearchers are responsible for establishing a safe, comfortable communication pattern so that participants can share what they are comfortable in sharing." The interviews were tape-recorded with the women's consent. They were transcribed verbatim by someone other than myself, as was also made

clear to the women prior to the interview. Appendix 3 is a copy of the consent form given to the women.

In conducting interviews, it is important to recognize that many factors can affect the data that is collected. Two significant ones, which have been discussed in a previous section (Section 3.2), need to be emphasized. Interviews are influenced by the researcher's self (that is, the researcher's positionality influences the research process) and the power relations that exist between the interviewer and interviewee, and the researcher's ability to deal with and try to break down this hierarchical relationship.

3.6 Data Analysis

The main interpretive technique used for this study is that of coding data thematically from the 20 interviews. The first stage of data analysis involved reading through the transcribed data in order to familiarize myself with trends and themes. In the process I made notes on the recurring themes and issues that emerged from the data. The second phase of analysis involved the manual coding of twelve transcripts. I felt twelve interviews were sufficient to provide the basis for a preliminary "interview theme code". This contained a list of the main themes and sub-themes that emerged throughout the twelve interviews. The finalized "coding theme system" developed from all 20 interviews is presented in Appendix 4. This coding system was produced after all interviews were coded using the cutting and pasting method (this is discussed in more detail below). A transcript was given to an outsider along with the "coding theme system" to code. The coded transcript was cross checked against my coding of the interview to ensure

consistency. The results were consistent because my coded interview and the one given to the other person were similar.

The next phase of analysis used the traditional cut-and-paste method. This involved going back to the data and identifying coded data that can stand on its own; that is, that makes sense when it is separated from its context, with similar pieces of data. This method allowed me to remain close to and aware of the data by involving myself in all aspects of the analysis. During this process of organizing the data, the “coding theme system” was refined by incorporating new themes from the other eight interviews. After the cutting and pasting was complete, some themes became saturated with related quotes (responses filled with recurring quotes from the interviews), and others were quite thin (responses that were not a common theme from the interviews). The themes that were saturated contained enough information to make statements with a comfortable degree of certainty that these were significant issues for the women interviewed. However, the themes that were weakened through the analysis are as significant as those issues commonly raised. That is, they are important in suggesting where future research needs to be directed. Next, the thematic data were summarized. Patterns, trends, and anomalies within the themes were described. Further, links between the themes were identified; that is, tying all the themes together by looking for trends and patterns between the themes.

The final stages of data analysis involved interpreting and explaining the findings using a feminist theoretical framework to help explain women’s experiences of homework (see Chapter Four).

3.7 Research Findings

In presenting research findings, priority was given to the voices of the participants. Through the use of quotes I let women speak for themselves so that they could be heard in their own words. As mentioned previously, to conduct research that empowers women, I feel it is necessary that women are given the opportunity to speak out on their own terms. Therefore, the quotes from the women are presented verbatim. Patton (1990, 24) accurately summarized the value of direct quotes in, “revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their work, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions.” Although direct quotations are the primary strategy for presenting findings in this study, tables are utilized for summarizing certain data. A powerful technique for strengthening the credibility of research is triangulation in which multiple methods are used to strengthen credibility. For this study, source triangulation was employed. This refers to the use of more than one report from a data set to corroborate a construct or concept by using the quotations from several different respondents in interpreting the data (Baxter and Eyles 1990). However, in stating this, I am not claiming that a single quote which raises a significant issue is necessarily to be regarded as not corroborating a concept. An issue raised solely by one woman may be significant in justifying a construct and indicating new directions of research.

My decision on relevancy (and inclusion) or irrelevancy (and exclusion) of quotes depended on a number of criteria. The criteria were: one, the frequency of the responses, in other words, those responses that were somehow “typical” of the responses in general;

two, quotes that may express a particular theme of the study well; and three, statements that were made infrequently but that I felt deserved attention because they suggest possible directions for future research.

3.8 Summary

This study uses a feminist methodological framework which aims to uncover the lived experiences of women doing paid work in the home. This feminist framework addresses many issues relating to the credibility of qualitative research. A number of guarantees of good faith have been utilized to help ensure the credibility and quality of this study. As Stanley (1990, 159) claims:

Much feminist research deals with the problems involved in processing data by producing a number of 'guarantees of good faith': by having a woman researcher, by studying woman subjects, and sometimes by researching in small-scale, more natural contexts and reproducing lengthy quotes from research subjects.

The credibility of this feminist research was further enhanced by a number of other guarantees, such as placing the personal in the research, dealing with power relations within research settings, and including the voices of "others". To do credible research one has to disclose all aspects that may affect the research and this in turn helps to produce a rigorous piece of work. Because the researcher is involved in the research process, and is not simply an instrument in data gathering, she/he needs to clearly account for how and why the research is being done, and who is being studied.

The invisibility of this group of workers within society was evident in the difficulty encountered in locating them. There was no direct access to these women, such as a

home-based workers' directory; therefore, I had to go through the unsuccessful route of contacting corporations which refused me access. Consequently, these women were not even given the option of participating in this study. Fortunately, through advertisements, personal contacts, and the use of the "snowball" method an appropriate sample emerged.

The qualitative method (in-depth interviewing) and interpretive technique (cutting-and-pasting) utilized in this study were useful in uncovering the active and diverse ways women experience home-based work. In-depth interviewing allowed homeworkers to have a voice of their own in the sense that they were able to tell their stories. Cutting-and-pasting was an effective method of organizing the data and simultaneously allowed me to be close to the data throughout the data analysis.

Chapter Three endnotes

[1] This chapter will focus on how the research is being done, for a discussion on why the research is being done please refer back to Chapter Two.

[2] In this map taken from Grant (1996) the region of Mississauga, located approximately 20 kilometres east of Burlington, is not shown.

[3] These characteristics were mentioned in an Explanatory letter sent out to potential participants (Appendix 1).

[4] Because of the difficulty in finding a sample of 20 women for this study, one woman who was African Canadian made note to me that she was, but was willing to participate in the study regardless.

[5] These positions are based on the self-definitions of being self-employed or what the women themselves define their job status in the home. See endnote number six for more details.

[6] Interestingly, the homework positions, as illustrated in Table 3.1, of the women do not necessarily correspond to women's class position. That is, there are contradictions between how I define the women's class position (on the basis of the criteria) and their self-definition of their homework position. These women may be considered self-employed (for tax purposes) or consider themselves self-employed, but in reality they do not correspond to the self-employed position based on the criteria used. The criteria used in this study for class positions, looks that the amount of power women have over conditions of labour, which consequently places certain self-employed homeworkers into working class positions. Therefore, in

order to remain consistent and to avoid discrepancies in how these women's class positions are categorized and to help us understand the differences class positions make in homeworkers' experiences, class positions will be referred to rather than homework positions in the research findings (Chapter Five). In this study, seven women occupied positions in the petite bourgeoisie, two occupied the modern petite bourgeoisie, and eleven occupied the working class.

[7]Because the interviews were influenced by the themes I was particularly interested in and by the women's own thoughts on other issues, I found that not all proposed themes and questions were covered by all women. I asked the women for only one hour of their time and I wanted to respect this knowing the women all lead busy lives and were taking time off from their paid and unpaid work for this study. Therefore, because women introduced their own issues of concern and the time constraint in being able to cover all themes, certain questions and issues were only asked and discussed by certain women in the research findings. This may have affected the consistency of the results in that if only a small number of women responded to a certain question, the results are suggestive and more evidence is needed to further support the claim made.

CHAPTER FOUR

Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

This study uses a feminist theoretical framework to interpret data and to develop a critical understanding of the active and diverse ways women experience homework. The general conceptual framework I am working with is a socialist feminist one. In this approach, both class and gender relations of power play an important role in shaping the experience of female home-based workers. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the theoretical arguments that are relevant to understanding the experiences of women doing homework. These arguments draw and build on existing conceptual arguments in socialist feminist geography perspective and existing studies of women and homework (discussed in Chapter Two). The following sections provide first, a brief overview of the main arguments of a socialist feminist perspective. This is then followed by specific hypotheses about women homeworkers and rationales as to how these hypotheses derive from or relate to a socialist feminist approach.

4.2 Overview of a Socialist Feminist Perspective

A socialist feminist perspective regards both class relations and gender relations as important forces in women's oppression and exploitation in patriarchal, capitalist societies. For this study, gender relations are socially structured relations of dominance and inequality between the sexes (Clement and Myles 1994; Fincher 1989). Further, gender

relations are conceptualized as integral to the reproduction of social power and oppression within the home, workplace, and residence community as class relations (Chouinard forthcoming 1995). Class relations are the social relationships between people in the paid workplace, the community, and the home through which one experiences class; that is, the unequal relationship between capital and labour in a capitalist society (Fincher 1989). Accordingly, a socialist feminist approach situates a class-based analysis of women's subordination within the context of the overall reproduction of advanced capitalist societies. That is, the oppression of women is based in part on the role that women in exploited classes play as reproducers of labour power in a class society (McDowell 1986).

According to a socialist feminist approach and for the purpose of this study, class positions are determined by the amount of power one has over one's conditions of labour. This study looks at a specific aspect of class relations; that is, the relations which give rise to a set of class positions by comparing the amount of economic power a person has within a particular position in the class structure. For this study, homeworkers were categorized according to where they fall in the class structure (refer back to Table 3.3) based on the socialist feminist criteria (see Chapter Three). The relations which give rise to class positions are significant in understanding what difference class makes to women's ability to control conditions of work and lives more generally. In addition, the sets of relations which give rise to contradictory positions are examined. For instance, one's experience of class does not follow straight forwardly from one's class position. The experience of one's class position differs based on the varying conditions under which women are doing homework. For instance, we cannot treat the working class as a

homogenous group, nor can we assume one singular experience of class position. Rather, within the working class there may be privileged members who are able to improve their working conditions relative to others situated in this class. Therefore, we need to be aware of how the conditions female homeworkers face differ from others in the same class position. Because all women are subject to subordination in capitalist societies, we need to examine how these shared experiences are distinct between classes and within classes themselves (McDowell 1986).

The separation of the home and work into private and public domains respectively, and the coding of the private sphere as women's domain and the public as men's domain is an important aspect of socialist feminist's claims about the ideological assumptions that constitutes private and public spaces (Mackenzie 1988; 1989). The associated ideological construction of what constitutes "real" work; that is, work done in the public sphere and for a wage, is another important aspect of a socialist feminist approach because this definition helps to devalue the unpaid work done mostly by women in the home. This spatial separation has resulted in a very oppressive and isolating experience for women confined to the sphere of reproduction (Mackenzie and Rose 1983). Clearly, the socialist feminist perspective is concerned with the ideological conditions shaping women's lives, such as ideas about where women should be, what women should be, and how women should act. Thus, according to a socialist feminist approach, women within capitalist society are defined as responsible for reproductive work, such as mothering and caring for adults. It is argued that women's roles are based on social constructions of gender embedded in social contexts and processes through a

system of complex boundaries (such as spatial, social, and cultural) that help to define what is appropriate for each gender, and through self concepts, beliefs, and behavioural expectations. Socialist feminists are also concerned with the social construction of gender and its importance in the processes of urban and regional change; for example, the roles that women play in industrial and domestic labour processes, and women's capacities to effectively contest conditions of everyday life in the workplace and community (Mackenzie 1989; McDowell and Court 1994; Chouinard 1995). Socialist feminists have also adopted the historical materialist argument that, one's material conditions affects one's life. As Mackenzie (1989, 55) stated:

Women in capitalist society (and by implication men) are defined from, live and work in, and analyze themselves from an inherently contradictory material position. Women are defined as responsible for essential social work - mothering and caring for adults - what is commonly called reproductive work, in a society where power and analytic categories derive primarily from the productive sphere. Like class relations, but in a more obvious way, gender relations are constituted not only by relations of production, but also by the dialectically related relations involved in the reproduction of people.

4.3 Conceptualizing Women's Paid Work at Home

In our capitalist, patriarchal society, all choices made by women are constrained by the organization of power in society. Therefore, it is inaccurate to portray the decisions women make to do homework as the outcome of individual choice. Rather, what is necessary is to examine the extent to which and how gender and class relations of power play out in women's decisions to do homework. By looking at this issue in this way, one can understand the constraints and limitations placed on women within society as well as

the conditions which women continue to confront within patriarchal, capitalism. As Katz and Monk (1993) and Basow (1993) claim, the social construction of gender and women's socialization into primary roles of wives and mothers are very influential, as evident in the fact that many women experience the dilemma between home and work demands. Furthermore, Dangler (1994) argues that the social constraints placed on women as a result of their double day and personal expectations about being a good wife and mother, as well as continued family members' expectations about their motherly role and work-related factors, such as the lack of affordable day care and lack of flexible work, have constrained women's "choice" in doing homework. In addition, economic necessity and restructuring in the labour market also influences women's "choice" to do homework. Together these ideologies, practices, and inadequate working conditions confronted by women in patriarchal, capitalist society influence women's decision to do homework and continue to reinforce the operation of gender relations of power in society. Because women are not a homogenous group, their specific situation or circumstances affect the way in which gender relations of power constrain their decision. Hence, I hypothesize that gender relations of power play a significant role in women's decision to do homework, albeit these relations find expression in different ways for women in different circumstances. The patriarchal ideological notion that women belong in the home and studies such as Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) which concluded that many women were faced with expectations to remain in the home has influenced the hypothesis that women have decided to do homework because they are expected by family members to remain in the home.

Women working from home experience the home space as a site of both paid and unpaid work. Building on the socialist feminist claim that women's domestic role is isolating and oppressive, I argue that the combining of the two spheres will result in women experiencing geographical isolation and/or a different geographical experience of the private sphere of the home, especially if they once worked outside the home. Consequently, it is hypothesized that homework is one of many work arrangements that help reinforce and reproduce the hegemonic ideology of women's appropriate place as the private, domestic sphere. This hypothesis builds on the socialist feminist claim that the ideological conditions which shape women's lives and the social construction of gender are influenced by a system of boundaries which define what is appropriate for each. Dyck's (1995) work on disabled women in the home has influenced my ideas by looking at the issue of social/spatial isolation and how it relates and affects women homeworkers. In Dyck's study, she examined the shrinking social and geographical lifeworlds[1] of disabled women as the home becomes the central space in their lives.

Despite women's increased participation in waged work, the patriarchal meaning attached to the historical separation of private and public sphere (Mackenzie 1988) continues to encourage people to devalue women's labour in the home. This point is consistent with conclusions in the literature (see for example, Boris and Daniels 1989; Allen and Wolkowitz 1987) that homework shares the devalued status given to housework. It is also consistent with the socialist feminist argument that women's work in the home is devalued as it is not considered to be "real" work because "real" work is performed in the public realm of productive work. Drawing on these arguments about

home as a separate non-work, feminine sphere and the devaluation of women's work in general, I hypothesize that women's paid work in the home will be devalued through misconceptions based on ideological views that the home is a domestic, non-work, and non-wage earning sphere. Another indication of this devaluation reported in the literature is that others do not regard this work as sufficiently important or "real" that it deserves to take place without interruption and so disrupt these women's homework and work space (Costello 1988; 1989; Christensen 1993). Therefore, I hypothesize that homeworkers experience devaluation of their paid work by the interruptions they face to their paid work by friends and family. Lastly, there is the socialist feminist theoretical claim that the devaluation of women's work in the home and isolation in the home causes women doing paid labour in the home to be exploited. This was confirmed by other studies (Costello 1988; 1989; Christensen 1989). Therefore, it is hypothesized that women homeworkers are exploited through unpaid labour and/or unpaid expenses.

According to Luxton and Rosenberg (1986) the most powerful myth surrounding housework is one which claims that a woman's place is in the home, based on the assumption that they are the best caregivers for children and they are "naturally" inclined to cook, clean, and manage the running of the household. As authors like Mackenzie (1989) and McDowell and Court (1994) argue, gender relations in home and work spaces are actively contested by women. I hypothesize that women homeworkers, in order to do paid work in the home, try to reduce their share of unpaid domestic work. However, although women try to contest and transform gendered relations of power within the home, "the gendered division of labour, and particularly women's responsibility for

domestic labour, have been identified as central to women's oppression in the capitalist society as a whole and specifically to women's subordination to men within families" (Luxton 1986, 17). Therefore, women's struggles to reduce their share of domestic work have limited impact on domestic inequality (Luxton 1986, Kane and Sanchez 1994). Further, as reported in the home-based work literature (Christensen 1989), women working from home continue to maintain the primary role in domestic responsibilities and may find at times that their unpaid responsibilities have actually increased. I hypothesize that doing homework reinforces and reproduces the gendered division of labour and the subordination of women within the home by continuing to assign the prescribed domestic and nurturing roles to women in the home.

Based on the socialist feminist perspective, women trying to create space within the home for paid work are contesting social patriarchal constructions of space in the home. The social construction of space has influenced the operation of the construction of the home; that is, the home being a place of family life. Further, the dominant ideology that "woman's place is in the home" is one of the most important guiding principles in architectural design (Hayden 1980). However, woman's place in the home is not regarded as one of waged worker, but rather domestic worker. Consequently, the home is not a place constructed to adequately facilitate women doing paid work in the home. Women's ability to resist patriarchal, capitalist pressure by challenging the hegemonic construction of the home as a place of family life varies in terms of their ability to (re)structure space in order to facilitate paid work in the home. As Dyck (1995, 308) stated in her study of disabled women, "These remappings [of the home space] reflect women's strategies of

doing paid work within the home whose position is spatially and socially positioned by cultural norms...” Therefore, the reorganization of the home space is influenced by women’s roles manifested through dominant ideological constructions of gender roles. It is hypothesized that gender relations of power play out in the social construction of home spaces, as that of domestic space, and make it difficult for women to appropriate exclusive space within the home to accommodate paid work.

Authors, such as Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) claim that women working in the home face an increased amount of stress and difficulty as the pressures of both waged and unwaged work intensifies and their ability to separate the two declines. By doing homework, women are not eliminating their multiple roles, rather they integrate them into one sphere and the potential for conflict between their roles increase. The conflict produced from the interaction of women’s roles was documented in various studies (Costello 1988; 1989; Christensen 1993). I hypothesize that the transformation of the home space into a site of both paid and unpaid work will cause women to face interaction between their roles. It is further hypothesized that as a result of this interaction homeworkers will face conflict between their roles.

The home has been commonly associated with a haven, a place to go to after a long day at work to relax and be with one’s family; however, for women the home has never been a haven (Mackenzie and Rose 1983). For women, the home has been a workplace in which they are inundated with domestic responsibilities. However, the home continued to be a place for women to go to and get away from paid work. As Harris (1996, 9) argued, “Women could view the home as a place of family privacy and in that

sense as a retreat from the world at large.” With the integration of paid work into the private sphere of the home, women no longer have this spatial retreat from paid work. Therefore, it is hypothesized that with the integration of paid work into the home space, and the redesignation of the home space as a place of both paid and unpaid work women experience a changed meaning of place. Dyck’s work on women with Multiple Sclerosis shows how the transformation of home and work spaces results in changes in women’s experience of place (the home as a locus of family life) as it becomes the central spaces of their lifeworlds.

Capitalists and patriarchs benefit greatly by having women doing paid work in the home, they save on operating costs which are transferred to the homeworkers (Bradley 1987; duRivage and Jacobs 1989), and they increase their profits through the unpaid labour and expenses shouldered by homeworkers, and the lower wages paid to homeworkers and lack of benefits. On the other hand, women homeworkers gain few advantages (Lozano 1989). Two common cultural images of homework, are that it provides flexibility in combining home and work lives, personal autonomy, and is a work strategy that allows women to combine child care with paid work, are not accurate representations of homework. For instance, homework may offer flexibility in combining home and work; however, it causes further difficulties for women, such as having to work long extended hours. Based on these findings from the literature, I hypothesize that the flexibility and autonomy perceived to be offered by doing homework is not experienced in the same way or to the same degree by all women. I further hypothesize that the

representation of homework as an “ideal” child care strategy does not accurately reflect the realities of home-based work for women.

Homeworkers differ in how susceptible they are to negative consequences of homework; that is, the degree to which they face exploitative conditions, such as poor wages, and lack of employee benefits varies between homeworkers (Beach 1989). The home-based work findings suggest, however, that a general outcome of home-based work is that the power relations of inequality and women’s vulnerable position in society tend to be perpetuated. I hypothesize that class relations are reinforced and reproduced to the extent that women experience negative economic consequences. In this study, these consequences are measured by partial indicators, such as wages and benefits.

4.4 Summary

The conceptual arguments discussed in this chapter can help to improve our understanding of women’s experience of paid work at home, and provide explanations of some of the social processes at work in shaping those experiences. I have argued that gender relations of power and class relations are played out in various ways and forms in women’s experience of homework. These relations are at work in: the reasons women decide to do homework; the social/spatial isolation faced by women doing homework; the devalued status attributed to homework and the women doing such work; the persistent gender division of labour in the household; the various difficulties women encounter in doing homework; the cultural images of homework; and the types of vulnerability women

face in doing homework. This conceptual framework is used to guide and interpret the research findings in the following chapter.

Chapter Four endnotes

[1]As Dyck (1995, 307) noted, "The concepts of the lifeworld, with its concentration on the taken-for-granted, mundane experiences and activities of everyday life as carried out in particular spatio-temporal settings, has been important in investigations of the subjective experiences of the chronically ill."

CHAPTER FIVE

The Experiences of Female Homeworkers

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the empirical results of this study through the discussion of various issues and by doing so describe and explain the lived experiences of female home-based workers. This chapter is divided into eleven sections with each section focusing on a significant issue discussed during interviews with the 20 female homeworkers.[1]

5.2 Evaluating Home-Based Work: Women's Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with Homework

Have women's experience of homework made them satisfied or dissatisfied with doing home-based work? Of the 20 homeworkers interviewed, fifteen were satisfied, four were dissatisfied, and one was unsure (not really satisfied and not really dissatisfied) with their overall homework experience (Table 5.1). Although this finding was consistent with the high number of satisfied teleworkers documented in a study done in the Public Service Sector (Johnson 1993); that study was of unionized teleworkers who I consider "more" economically and politically privileged than the women of this study, in terms of having support from a union. This high number of satisfied homeworkers in this study was puzzling since none were unionized, and the many difficulties in doing homework documented in the literature had led me to expect that more women would express general dissatisfaction with homework.

Table 5.1: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with Homework

Participant	Satisfied/Dissatisfied
1	satisfied
2	satisfied
3	satisfied
4	dissatisfied
5	dissatisfied
6	satisfied
7	dissatisfied
8	satisfied
9	satisfied
10	satisfied
11	satisfied
12	satisfied
13	satisfied
14	satisfied
15	satisfied
16	satisfied
17	satisfied
18	satisfied
19	satisfied
20	unsure

Certain results from the interviews begin to raise doubts about women's personal level of satisfaction with homework. For instance, this homemaker illustrates how her satisfaction with homework is based on the fact that she feels she cannot do any better in the labour market due to her lack of education and paid work opportunities. So she makes do with her homework situation:

Sue: I am satisfied because I know that I'll never get that Bachelor's degree, I know I'll never get that Master's degree. I know I'm quite competent, quite capable of running a business. I have very few limitations. I've done a lot in terms of business. My level of expertise my level of understanding, you know I have the additional artist side. There's just so much I can do there's no reason why I would go look for a job. There's nothing out in the job market for someone like me, that's what the reality is, you know.

This statement confirms the point made in the literature; that is, for some women homework is a "better than nothing choice" when faced with inadequate conditions, such as lack of job opportunities within society at large. Discrepancies in women's satisfaction with homework were also questionable by looking at those who are satisfied doing homework, but are contemplating working outside the home. Of the fifteen homeworkers satisfied and the one unsure, when asked if they ever considered working outside the home once they began doing homework, seven women (one without children and six with younger and/or young children[2]) responded "Yes." If these women were satisfied with homework why were they contemplating working outside the home? Unlike the women satisfied with homework and yet contemplating working outside the home, all four homeworkers dissatisfied with home-based work want to stop doing homework and look for work outside. Three out of these four homeworkers realize working outside may not

be the best work arrangement for their families, but they can no longer tolerate doing home-based work. As this day care provider commented:

Jennifer: I'd take it [a job offer outside the home] in a minute. And my family they'd have to cope. Well my husband works until 3:30 so he can pick them up after school so it's not like they'd have to go to day care after school has finished for the day. And they have programs in the school, I mean, I had some concern about the lunch program for they had one adult for 80 kids and I know the supervision's inadequate because I've seen it. But, you know, I've gotten to that point where I think my needs have to come first and they'll just have to cope.

Similarly, the other day care worker with older children wants to stop doing homework because she has realized it is not worth all the pressure. In addition, her children press her to find something "better" than doing home-based day care. Acknowledging their personal dissatisfaction with homework, prioritizing their own needs, and wanting to change their paid work situation are means by which these women are trying to resist the patriarchal relations of power played out in the ideological pressure placed on women that places family and what is best for them first and foremost.

The satisfied homeworker without children indicated that her wanting to work outside the home was based on the disadvantages of the home-based business, such as insecurity of wages and inconsistency in the amount of her self-employed work in the home. Here the question arises again: why did this homeworker report being satisfied when she also says she wants to work outside due to the significant disadvantages of homework? Interestingly, this woman indicated that she is satisfied with homework because she loves the work she is doing; therefore, her satisfaction stems not from doing homework per se, but from the actual type of work she does within the home; that is,

painting, framing, and teaching art classes. In contrast, all four women dissatisfied with homework stated that they no longer enjoy/like the type of work they are doing. Therefore, these homeworkers' dissatisfaction stemmed at least partially from the actual type of work they were doing. For instance, typical responses were that they were bored with their work, and they no longer wanted the hassle of dealing with the job. This homeworker voiced her strong dissatisfaction with both homework and her job as a day care provider:

Jennifer: I hate homework, I want to get out and I will, I mean I will do anything I can, I hope soon too. I didn't realize it was going to be as bad as it was. I mean I loath day care with a passion so it's a good thing I get out because I can't even pretend anymore.

The discussion above raises the question, "On what basis are women claiming their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with homework"? From the interviews, for those women satisfied, the common reasons given were that they enjoyed their work, the flexibility homework offers, and being there for their family. The results indicated that women's dissatisfaction with homework stemmed from low wages, no respect for homeworkers, feeling isolated within the home and paid work interruptions. These findings regarding the bases of women's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with doing homework are consistent with those in home-based work literature (Costello 1988). Compared to previous home-based work literature, this study considers how certain factors have directly affected specific women's evaluation with homework through the results of the interviews. Further, this study begins to question why certain disadvantages in doing homework did not play a role in women's overall positive evaluation with homework. In doing this, we will begin to

understand what factors weigh into different women's overall evaluation of homework. And, by offering suggestions as to why certain factors influenced women's evaluation of homework, we can better understand women's reasoning for their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with homework.

5.3 The Path to Homework

In discussing how the women came to be involved in homework, all 20 women illustrated that the path to working in the home is complex. The reasons given by these women for working from home varies (see Table 5.2). As outlined in Chapter Four, I am concerned with the degree to which gender relations of power play a role in women's decision to work from home. In this section then, I introduce the homeworkers, highlighting their particular, specific understandings of why they decide to do paid work from home. Next, I look at the sort of sacrifices homeworkers make in doing home-based work. Lastly, in this section, I discuss research findings in light of the debate surrounding the degree of "choice" women have in doing homework. In order to better understand the different reasons women have to work from home, I make a contextual distinction between those homeworkers with children and those homeworkers without children. This division will allow us to see how reasons women with children have to work from home differ from those without children. Further, it will help illustrate the various ways gender relations of power play a role in women's decision to work from home and the different forms those relations take.

Table 5.2: Reasons for Working at Home

Reasons for Working at Home	Participants
children	1,2,3,4,5,7,10,11,12,13,14,16,17,18,19,20
restructuring of job	8,12,15
not wanting to commute	8,12
economic necessity	1,4,6,9
lack of paid work opportunities	3,4,6,10
lack of affordable, adequate day care	1,4, 5,11,13,16
something to do/make a bit of money	1,4,5,7,10,14,17,18,20
opportunity that came up	5,13,17
feeling stress at home and/or at work	11,15

5.3.1 Homeworkers with Children:

These women reported various reasons for their decision to work at home. By far the most frequently cited reason was being with their children. As illustrated in Table 5.2, for all sixteen homeworkers with children, a major impetus for them to work at home was for their children; that is, spending time with them and caring for them. Two women decided to work at home exclusively for their children. One woman who worked eighteen years in an accredited nursing home before quitting to work from home stated:

Nicole: Right now...part of the reason that I made this decision was so that I could work around the kids. You know I was 33 when I had my first, and 36 when I had my third, so all my priorities were very different I think then if I was in my early 20s or mid...they come first now.

Similarly, a woman working for a trust company for fourteen years who quit to start her own business stated:

Carol: I thought it would be easier if I work around the kids, I could work my hours. You know, it's hard with four, especially if one will get sick. If you have a full-time job to go to...the entire team ...but when you work for yourself you can sort of [pause] if you have to, you could work at night or you know, if you get stuck, you know, it's easier to work around them.

Seven out of the sixteen women with children stated that they were motivated to do homework either in order to have more to do than simply being a full-time mother and wife, or for "something to do/make a bit of money." For instance, this woman worked outside the home as a research assistant and an editorial assistant or managing editor at a university for thirteen years, when she decided to stay at home with her kids. This woman stated:

Tania: Well, I decided to stay home with my kids. I did a few part times before I decided to not do that anymore [her jobs at the University]. It

was just a little too much pressure and I just wanted to be my own boss and I like doing crafts and things so I just decided that I would start this and I could do it at home and be home with the kids.

Q: So, you were working full-time outside the home as a research assistant and you decided to stay home?

Tania: Then I had my first child and I worked. I kept my job and let the other half [of the job] go 'cause they were two basic separate jobs. Yeah, after the first one was born. And when the second one came along I stayed at home and that's when I decided...and then I worked into this slowly.

Interestingly, this woman quit her job so she could be at home with her children without the intention of working from home; however, she found she did not want to be a full-time mother and wife and so decided to begin her own business. This same homeworker continues:

Tania: Probably just something to do...and although I want to make a little bit of money.

Another woman who worked outside the home for only a short period before the birth of her son, was bored with her motherly role when the opportunity to work from home arose. This allowed her to continue to remain at home for her family and gave her something more to do. This homeworker claimed:

Lynn: I was restless being home with the kids and not sort of having something else to do because I find...well especially since they started getting a little bit older they didn't need me there every single second and likewise, I didn't want to be there. I want them to be independent...The other thing was the fact that I had a university degree and I had only worked for a year and then had my son and decided that I'd really like to do something to grow and this opportunity came up...Everything looked like I could make it, you know some extra money, and not have to leave the home...I think it's a huge relief for my husband too. I mean, if I was going out to work everyday and I had early morning meetings, you know, then he'd have to accommodate me, you know. He doesn't get home first and have to start dinner, I mean, I'm the one that does all that sort of stuff. So, it's easier for him, he can go just off to work and he doesn't have to worry about what's going on.

Two other women with children who were already at home started doing homework because it was an opportunity that came up which would allow them to remain at home with their children. Thus far, it is evident that children are a main factor influencing women's decision to remain in the home. These findings begin to suggest a connection between doing homework and women's judgment of what is best for their family. Other questions also begin to surface from these findings which need further consideration. For instance, were homeworkers' work options actually constrained by the needs of their family; do women feel homework is the ideal work option for them if family considerations were not an issue; and do women feel they can find a better job outside the home regardless of whether homework is a strategy which best accommodates their family demands? I argue that these homeworkers' reasons for doing home-based work are fairly typical of some of the sacrifices made by women for their families, and that this is one way in which dominant patriarchal ideology helps to maintain women's primary roles as mother and wife.

Some homeworkers with children gave other reasons for doing homework. For these women, being at home with their children was one of a number of reasons for working from home. Other reasons were financial (the need to make money), high day care costs, economic or industrial restructuring affecting their job, not wanting to commute, lack of paid work options for women to choose from, and feeling stress at work and/or at home. Two out of the sixteen women with children stated that financial considerations or the need to contribute to the household income influenced their decision to work from home. For instance this homeworker stated:

Mary: Basically, the reason that I stay at home is because of financial necessity...The birth of my son...That's the main reason that I did it.

For the other homemaker who cited financial necessity, this reason was directly linked to the lack of paid work opportunities for women. This latter reason was cited by two other homemakers with children. Six of the sixteen women stated that expensive and inadequate day care played a major role in influencing their decision to work from home. For instance, this homemaker, working full-time outside the home prior to going part-time outside the home and also starting her own business in the home, felt that going out to work full-time was not worth the high cost of placing her children into day care. She stated:

Carla: I wanted to only work three days a week and I had two very small children at the time that both require day care and it helped to eliminate the day care costs and allowed me a little more time to be at home with them. It wasn't worth you going out to work. Not at all, it costs me \$10,000 a year for child care for my two little ones because they're only a year apart and then 'till they started school it's a very, very costly adventure.

The inadequacies of day care in constraining women's decision to work at home was further evident in the following exchange:

Q: Were you looking at any other job options when you were contemplating working in the home?

Jennifer: No, because of the cost of day care. It would not have paid me, I worked it out and I would have come home with the same amount of pay as I would have earned baby sitting in my home which I think would have been something like \$600 a month.

Only one homemaker with children out of sixteen cited both restructuring of her job and not wanting to commute long distances as reasons for working at home. This woman's job was lost due to restructuring; however, she was offered another job by an associated

company which gave her the option to work from home. She indicated that this option was offered because part of this company's mandate is to reduce overhead costs. This woman accepted the offer because it would allow her more time with her children by not having to commute long distances. As this homemaker stated:

Rita: So it gave me the option of not commuting, doing a job, working for a person I love working for and had always wanted to.

Q: So were your children a factor in your decision?

Rita: Absolutely. If I commuted I would never see them [laughs] and I did not like the idea of having to get them up at five or six o'clock in the morning and shuffle them off somewhere because those were the day care arrangements I made based on being the most comfortable with them. Having to shuffle them while they're still in their pajamas and then not see them until late, late at night that was definitely part of it.

Only one out of sixteen women decided to work from home because she could no longer take the stress from work resulting from both the guilt she experienced of not being at home for her children and conditions at work. This experienced homemaker indicated:

Elysa: I thought, "I'm not making enough money to put up with all the added stress. And I really felt that I wasn't raising my children, they were with babysitters most of the time.

Lastly, three out of sixteen women stated lack of job opportunities as one of their reason for working from home. As this day care provider illustrates in the following exchange:

Q: So why are you working from home?

Rhonda: There's nothing better for me [in terms of outside jobs and] that's [it] in a nut shell.

Further related to the reasons why women work from home are particular family values - namely a strong view that good mothering requires women to be at home with their children and associated pressures faced by women to conform to women's traditional, primary role.[3] This connection emerged strongly from all the interviews with

homeworkers with children. Strong traditional family values and self-imposed expectations of what it means to be a good mother and wife became recurring themes throughout the interviews. These considerations encouraged some women to work from home and others to leave their jobs and begin working from home. Although the homeworkers were not asked directly whether pressures to conform to the socially constructed, traditional role of women (or mothers and wives) guided their decision to work from home nor did they volunteer that such pressures guided their decision, general responses to other questions provided compelling evidence that socially constructed views of women's roles were interrelated with reasons for doing home-based work. This point is confirmed in the following typical statements:

Nicole: I had a high powered job dealing with life and death situations, dealing with personnel, dealing with management. Yes, I gave that up for my kids because I saw in the many years it took me to make this decision, I saw things happening I didn't like. So, you try and find a plan, or a resolution, to get rid of those feelings because those three kids I brought into this world. I say their my assets and so what am I going to do to protect that, to cultivate that, to nurture that, so that I'm not having to worry about them ten years down the road, and who are they doing it with, because, hopefully I've developed a relationship strong enough with them that I'll know and I can't do that if I'm working.

Sue: It's just not for me, it's not just...it's not my sense of values. I just feel that, you know, when you have a child that child deserves every single opportunity.

Q: And you feel by working in your home you can give that to him?

Sue: There's lots of things that, you know, I can do with John [child] that a stranger wouldn't do that reflect our family's values...You'll know that if they don't get that time that they need they're not grounded. And I know that day care teachers have said to me, "You can always tell a child who's had the benefit of being at home when they were very young because they're more articulate, their thoughts are deeper, they're more sensitive, they're more confident.

Rosa: I believe if it is at all possible with babies if Mom can be there for the first year you've got a better baby in some ways...I just think it gives the kids a better sense of self, you know, a good identity and then they're a little more confident when they do strike out.

Interestingly, one woman, when asked the advantages of working in the home, commented that it allows her to share the responsibilities of child care with her husband whereas if she worked outside the home, it would all fall on his shoulders. This illustrates her view that what it means to be a good partner is not making her husband do all the child care. As this homemaker stated:

Rita: It allows us the ability to share the responsibilities...So if I took another job and commuted somewhere and came into an office it would all be on my husband because I'd be an hour away. So now we can share it and we do share.

Ironically, this woman, who wanted to share child care, now finds that she is primarily responsible for all domestic responsibilities. This issue of the gender division of labour within the home is discussed further in Section 5.6.

Responses to the question of what women felt would be different in their home if they worked outside also indicate that women's strong traditional views of mother's roles encourage them to work at home and to remain in the home even if contemplating leaving homework. Six of the seven homeworkers responded that their children would be different. For instance:

Julie: I guess I wouldn't have that flexibility to be with them whenever they needed me. I guess my main goal in life is that I wanna be there for my family and I wouldn't be able to do that if I worked outside the home. So my family I think, appreciates the fact that I can go to the school and take them on trips. I can always count on mommy in the van to be a driver. I'm always there to take them to appointments.

Lastly, when four homeworkers were asked if there was more adequate, more affordable day care, would they consider placing their children into day care, they all responded “No” because they wanted to be there for their children. This homeworker’s response is typical:

Q: If day care was more adequate, more affordable, would you consider placing your children in day care and working outside?

Jessica: Never! I had that option. I had several job offers all of which I turned down. I always said all I wanted to do was be at home with the kids.

These preliminary results suggest that because women value working in the home, their socialized family roles and goals reinforce women’s ties to the home sphere. Further, for at least some women the decision to work at home has more to do with their family goals/roles than inadequate social conditions, such as day care and lack of paid work opportunities.

These findings regarding the reasons women work at home are consistent with the findings reported in the home-based work literature (as discussed in Chapter Two, Christensen 1989; Nelson 1988; Gerson and Kraut 1988). Findings from this study and others on women’s decisions to do working at home, show that the reasons discussed above dominate women’s decisions to do home-based work.

The hypothesis that gender relations of power play a significant role in women’s decision to do homework is supported by the findings from interviews with homeworkers with children. For all homeworkers, the conditions under which they decided to do homework reflect gender relations of power used to maintain dominance and inequality between women and men. For instance, the results of interviews with women with children illustrated how gender relations of power were played out through the high cost

and inadequacy of day care, economic necessity, restructuring of women's jobs, the lack of work opportunities, the social construction of gender, and women's socialization into primary roles of mother and wife. Such conditions help to sustain prevailing relations of power within society. For example, the socialization of women into their primary roles as mother and wife causes many women's work options to become limited and forces women to stay at home or take a less satisfying, less well-paying job and this in turn keeps women in positions of limited economic power within society. This point is confirmed by the statement given by this homemaker:

Mary: It would be nice to have a greater income, to feel on the cutting edge of one's profession, but the guilt I would have in neglecting my family would outweigh any monetary or professional advantages.

The hypothesis that gender relations of power play a significant role in women's decisions to work from home, albeit in various ways for homeworkers in different circumstances, was also supported by the evidence produced from interviews with women with children. As illustrated in Table 5.2, not all homeworkers with children were faced with the same form(s) of gender relations of power in their decision to work from home. Rather, these relations found expression in different ways for all women. For instance, differences in the ways gender relations constrained women's decision to work from home is evident in the following statements by two homeworkers:

Jennifer: I figured out the child care costs wouldn't have been worthwhile. Also economic necessity and I couldn't find a job. At that moment jobs for people with my background, which was in social work, research and policy analysis, had started to bottom out because of cut backs in the health care field occurred, started in the mid-80s despite what the Harris government might want you to think and it has been going on for a very long time. And I couldn't find work.

In contrast, this child birth educator stated:

Jessica: Philosophically, that's what I think is important [to stay home with the children]. I was wanting to be at home with my kids especially when they were little and just because the commitment here to just keep the place running.

Both women's decisions to do homework were constrained by the gendered relations of power at work in society; however, the constraints differed in form and intensity. Because the circumstances of these homeworkers are different, gender relations of power affect them in different ways. For instance, Jennifer was searching for a job; however, the limited opportunities for women with her training caused her to start her own day care business in response to financial necessity. In contrast, Jessica was at home with her children when she wanted something else to do.

Interestingly, the homeworkers with children were asked if they were expected to stay at home by family members. All homeworkers responded "No." For instance:

Q: So there's expectations that you're the one who should stay home?

Sue: No, no, it's just always come down to, you know, ah...what we feel is the best case scenario. My husband, naturally, he had a job that he was making 60 grand a year, and you know, those jobs don't come often.

Q: No one in your family expected you to stay at home?

Rhonda: No, no, no, no. I wanted to, and I wanted to keep an eye on my kids too. Although that is a fine way because when you're out working you come home and you know you don't know who's been there and whatever.

Evidently, family members' expectations that women will remain in the home did not play a significant role in these women's decision to work at home. Therefore, the hypothesis that women's decision to work from home is influenced by family members' expectations was not supported by the findings. These findings contradict Allen and Wolkowitz's

(1987) finding that more than half of the homeworkers in their British study said their family members expected them to stay home. A possible reason for this contrary finding is that women may not always be directly receiving this message from family members. Rather, expectations that certain tasks will be done can create indirect expectations or pressure to remain in the home. For instance, this homemaker with two children illustrates the indirect expectations placed on her by her family:

Lynn: I'm talking a few years down the line [giving up her home-based job and working outside]...The odd time I've had appointments where they've [children] had to go to somebody else's house after school or they've been home with dad in the morning and I've shot out early because I had a meeting. They're just not as content and I find they make me pay for it. They are not as cooperative and they're just not the same.

Another possibility is that instead of getting verbal messages from their family to stay at home, these women have personally internalized this message through contact with the media, through dominant public discourse, and through upbringing. Therefore, rather than responding directly to "others" expectations, they may be responding to self-expectations of what it means to be a good mother and wife. This is consistent with the traditional family values argument discussed above which emphasizes the strong influence of the socialization of women into the roles of mother and wife on women's decision to work at home. This woman recognizes the expectations she places on herself:

Linda: But, it's like I think, my mom was home with me, and my brother and it was, "Mom should be there always available."

On the basis of these findings, we begin to see that part of the social process that keeps women tied to the home involves their primary socialization into traditional roles of being mothers and wives. The hegemonic ideology in patriarchal, capitalist societies

which insists that women are to be primary caretakers and that their roles of being mother and wife are primary is being reproduced and reinforced in the values homeworkers' with children hold concerning prioritizing the needs of their family. In this context, doing homework is in part the outcome of ideological processes at work in maintaining women's primary roles. For many of these women, these values led them to quit their job to work from home or to remain in the home and do paid work. Also, decisions to do homework made in response to the external conditions arising from gender inequalities in power within society, such as lack of affordable and adequate day care, and loss of women's jobs due to restructuring in the labour market and various industries suggest that many women remain a captive labour force in the home who have no other alternative but to do home-based work.

5.3.2 Homeworkers without Children:

What prompted women without children to work from their homes? As illustrated in Table 5.2, the common reasons given for women without children to work from home were lack of paid work opportunities, restructuring of job, economic necessity, not wanting to commute, and feeling stress at work and at home. For example, these homeworkers stated:

Irene: If there was a real glut of jobs and you could just walk out then it would have been far easier working outside the home.

Anne: Just so that I would feel more relaxed. There are a lot of changes going on with the company and new age management systems are being put into place, and there are a lot of changes going on...I felt I would be more relaxed...In 20 years you've seen a lot of changes and now with the new team work, you sort of want to relieve yourself from those stresses

because as much as it is important to have a job, its as important to make sure your well-being is in tact...My husband hasn't been working for five years. There becomes a lot of tension in the relationship because I'm going out and I'm working everyday and he's staying here at the house.

For Irene economic necessity was related to the lack of paid work opportunities for women, as was the case for one of the homeworkers above with children. As Irene stated:

Irene: Working from home was an [economic] necessity. Who's going to hire me at 50, you know, there's all these young kids with no jobs why would they take me and that's what it comes down to.

One woman who chose to work at home because her job was being restructured opted to remain in the home to avoid commuting. This may seem to be a personal choice; however, when asked the advantages of working at home, she claimed that it allows her to help around the house and lessen the burden for her husband:

Katy: So I feel like a lot of things have been lifted off his shoulders. So it makes me feel as if I'm participating in keeping our house, rather than when I was at work all the time.

This quote is significant because there is an interesting contradiction in this homemaker's response. That is, when asked why she wanted to work at home she indicated job restructuring and commuting as the two main reasons; however, her response regarding the advantages of homework indicates another reason. Although not stated directly by this woman as a reason to work at home, it seems that the values and/or the expectations of what it means to be a good wife played a role in this woman's decision to work from home. This supports the notion that there is a connection between doing paid work at home and women's internalized expectations and values of what it means to be a good mother and/or wife.

The reasons given by these women without children for working at home are consistent with the findings in the literature (although the exact reasons for women with/without children to work from home was not an issue in the literature) (Christensen 1989; Johnson 1996). The hypothesis that gender relations of power play a significant role in women's decision to do homework is further supported by the interviews with women without children. Homeworkers without children experienced conditions associated with gendered relations of power that were similar to homeworkers with children. For instance, gender relations for women without children were expressed in the impact of women's primary socialization of being a wife, job restructuring, economic necessity, and lack of paid work opportunities on decisions to work at home. Again, the connection between gender relations of power and such factors as restructuring of women's jobs exemplify how power relations within society operate in maintaining a gender division of power. Because the impacts of restructuring are gendered, women who hold less secure jobs feel the greatest effects of such a process by being laid off or transferred to an undesirable location (as was the case for homeworkers in this study) or job and which may in turn lead to further decreasing paid work opportunities for women. Consequently, gender relations of power are being played out and reinforced in restructuring of women's jobs. The hypothesis that gender relations of power play a significant role in homeworkers' decision to work at home, albeit in different ways for women without children is also supported by the interviews. For instance, the gender relations played out in Irene's decision to work at home was constrained by the lack of paid work opportunities and economic necessity compared to Anne's situation whose

decision was based on stress at home and at work. For these women, the decision to work from home was influenced by the gender relations of power; however, their situation affects the ways in which gendered relations constrain their decision. That is, Irene was searching for a job and due to a lack of opportunities for women in the labour market and a need for money versus Anne who has been an employee with the same company for many years and needed a change in which homework became an option.

5.3.3 Sacrifices of the Home-Based Working Woman:

As noted by Christensen (1993), women often sacrifice their careers for their families when they work from home. This is supported by the findings of this study. The interviews illustrated that sacrifices to women's own needs in doing homework becomes part of women's home-based work experience. The pressures for women to conform to their traditional, primary role have influenced their decision to work from home and encouraged them to prioritize their family needs. In the process, such patriarchal values or strong traditional views of women's roles have caused them to sacrifice their own needs. These sacrifices were most evident in the responses given by women with children. One such sacrifice was that women with children gave up their long-time paid work career outside the home to do home-based work. For example, Nicole gave up her nursing career to remain at home with her three children and start a business with her husband. The following homeworkers illustrate a wide range of other sacrifices made to women's career by doing home-based work:

Lynn: I always thought that when my daughter went off to school full-time I would go back to work but, she's in grade four now, so the opportunity

came over three years ago but back then too, my husband was doing a lot of traveling. So even for me to work part-time outside the home was very, very difficult because I didn't know from one week to the next if I needed a sitter.

Nicole: It becomes a real, almost a moral issue. I mean, I had my children because Fred and I wanted children, but it was very hard for me to give up that career. I won't say it was easy, I call it professional PMS. I still have days, a year later, where I'm going, "I want to go back to work." I miss it.

Another homemaker, when faced with looking for another job after her job was lost due to restructuring, chose homework over other ideal work positions so she would not have to commute and would thus have more time to spend with her family and be able to lessen the domestic responsibilities of her husband:

Rita: Some of the other options were fabulous. A job in Toronto ruled out because I already decided I am not commuting to Toronto daily but I would love the job, it was an ideal job that I've always wanted so I just ignored that...So being able to work in the home provided me the ability to not commute, have more time, be able to see my children.

A home-based day care worker who is dissatisfied with her work, has no regrets about working from home because she feels it was best for her family.

Rhonda: I did this for my kids, so that they didn't have to go through what I went through. I wasn't that much educated. Now at least she [her daughter] can become a legal secretary, she can work in a hospital, she can do what she wants.

Another homemaker with three children illustrated how her strong views of good mothering kept her from pursuing her career to its fullest potential:

Linda: This is the kind of company they made a point at a meeting saying that you could do whatever you want to do when you want to do it. I sat there and I thought, "Yeah, you can do what you want in the company in terms of get more people to work for you." Like they will say, "If you get six people to work under you then you become a little leader and you get a cut of what they make." But I thought you can do it but I've got a family.

I can do it when it fits in with the other things I feel are more important really. Like money is important, no doubt about it, but I don't want my kids to view me as, "Mommy goes out the door all the time."

This situation is similar to that of another woman, who did not pursue her career to its fullest potential because of her children; however, with her children now being older, she is able to concentrate more on her career:

Elysa: Definitely, homework is easier because I really don't have to consider them too much any more...So, yeah, I think I have bigger goals now than I did. I knew I had to keep a limit when your child is first, children are small. They are a big part of your life and I always felt that I could only set goals within reason. Now I feel I can set bigger goals because I have more time. You're not hurting anybody, you know.

This last quote raises two points. First, is the statement, "You're not hurting anybody" indicative of the guilt women feel when they do not place their family prior to their career? I want to suggest that this feeling of guilt is due to the naturalization of women's domestic role within society and the internalization of such roles by women themselves (for example, what it means to be a good mother). These women feel that they must place their roles of mother first and foremost or their children will pay the consequences. This is consistent with Basow's (1992) argument. She contends that the fear imposed on women within society about the harm caused to children if their mothers are absent benefit men. This notion keeps women tied to the home and tending to the family, and helps to keep their power within the realm of paid work limited. Consequently, such ideological notions reinforce gendered relations of power within society by maintaining the power inequalities between women and men. This woman's quote also illustrates how young/younger children restricted this woman's career potential. This begins to illustrate how the age of

children can have an influence on the experiences of home-based workers. This homemaker found that gendered relations of power played out in the ideological process of maintaining women's primary role as mother lessened as the age of her children increased (now both are over 20 years old) and that she can now focus more on her paid work roles.

Lastly, I want to raise another sacrifice that homeworkers make to their career by putting their family first; that is, the future, long term, personal and economic costs of prioritizing their families' needs. The gender relations of power that constrain women's decision to work from home also have possible future implications for homeworkers which help to keep women in precarious positions within society at large. However, this consideration did not seem to affect women's satisfaction with homework. For instance, this homemaker raises concerns about possible future consequences, such as economic vulnerability; however this did not seem to diminish her general satisfaction with homework:

Nicole: Becasue I think as a person, I knew that no matter what, whether there's divorce or separation or death or whatever, I am financially independent. I have a job that pays well, I can support myself [when she worked outside the home]. Well if there was a divorce or separation, the company - now where's the company. If there's a death I think I could still go on with the company but that financial security is not as evident. And I know that's kind of a quirky way of looking at it. I hope that would not happen to Joe and I, but you don't know. But if I was working I still always had my job, I still had an income, I still had my independence financially. So now to have committed myself that's got to tell you how much I trust my relationship now to commit to something like this, but it has been a big adjustment for me.

Did the opportunity to stay home with their family play role in women's general satisfaction with homework? The results suggest that for homeworkers with children, their satisfaction is strongly interrelated to the ability for these women to be at home with their children. For instance, what was articulated from the findings was that women's satisfaction with homework was based on the fact that they feel they are doing the best for their family. These responses of homeworkers with children were fairly typical:

Carol: Sometimes I get frustrated and I think, I'm going to go and look for a job, but then I think it's better for the kids that I'm here. Like I'm here when they get home from school or I'm here in the morning when they leave.

Jessica: The nature of my work is totally focused on getting my family off to a good start.

Further, all homeworkers with children satisfied and the one homeworker unsure cited the advantages of homework is that it allows them to be there for their children. This woman's response was typical:

Lynn: I'm always here for my kids. If there's a problem at school, I'm always here to take the phone...And going out on field trips with the kids, helping out in the classroom if they have a special project. I really want to be here for my kids.

For these women, homework was perceived as the "ideal" situation at the present time for meeting their family needs. This is illustrated in this typical response to the question of whether this homeworker thinks of working outside the home again:

Laura: Not right now. I think once the children are all in school then maybe I'll look for something outside the home.

For the four women with children who are dissatisfied with homework, one of the reason they decided to work from home was because of their children. However, this advantage

is now being outweighed by the many disadvantages of doing homework. Therefore, the opportunity to be home with their children is no longer sufficient to satisfy them. As this dissatisfied homemaker noted:

Linda: I don't need this anymore, the negatives are outweighing the positives.

The results presented above concerning one, the expectations and strong family values shared widely by society and internalized by women themselves; two, the social constraints played out in the gendered relations of power; and three the sacrifices women make to their career and their future personal needs illustrate how power relations work so well in "keeping women in their place" and reinforcing the subordinate position of women within the family and in society at large. And further, in deciding to do homework and in the process directly accepting the dual roles; that is being a mother and/or wife and a waged worker, reinforces such a dilemma faced by women instituted by the gender relations of power within society.

5.3.4 Home-Based Work: An Expression of Choice?:

As outlined in Chapter Two, the debate about whether homework is an expression of choice or lack of choice surfaced in the home-based work literature (Gerson and Kraut 1988; Walker 1989). As argued in Chapter Four, none of our choices are completely voluntary in patriarchal, capitalist societies rather, choices are constrained by the organization of power; therefore, it is inaccurate to portray the decision to do homework as the outcome of individual choice. Evidently, as seen in the above discussion of research findings, homework for women is not an expression of choice, rather their decision to

work in the home is constrained by gender relations of power which played a significant role in the homeworkers' decision to work from home, although in different ways for women in different circumstances. These constraints were consistent with those documented in the studies which focused on the degree to which home-based work was a choice amongst few options for women. Interestingly, as evident in the interviews, women do not perceive gender relations as playing a significant role in constraining their choices. Of the fourteen homeworkers both with children and without, asked whether they felt their decision to work at home was constrained, thirteen believed that they "freely" chose to work from home. As these homeworkers indicated when asked if they felt they freely decided on her own to work from home:

Mary: The decision to work from home was made by me. My husband approved and he liked the idea too.

Rosa: Oh yeah, oh yes, it was a totally voluntary decision. It was solely up to me. My husband, he'll support me in either way I chose [to work outside, in the home, or not to work].

These quotes illustrate how the women did not feel that their decision to work from home was constrained by the gender relations manifested in their commitment to a traditional domestic role, lack of affordable and adequate day care, or economic necessity. Only one woman disagreed that women freely choose to do homework. As this day care provider put it:

Jennifer: Well they don't choose freely, they choose because they have to put food on the table. It costs an average of \$90 a week to put food on the table. Well, where is it going to come from?

Why do most of the homeworkers interviewed not view their decision to work at home as constrained by gender relations of power? One possible explanation is that these women do not see factors, such as their ideological commitment to remaining in the home, the (indirect) expectations placed on women, lack of affordable and adequate day care, and lack of paid work opportunities as shaping their choices. This lack of consciousness of gender relations and roles helps to explain why gendered power relations work so well in society. Rather than women seeing themselves as a group who have in some ways been forced back into the home, their appropriate traditional place within patriarchal, capitalist societies, they see themselves as “freely” deciding to work from home. I believe this is a serious concern in that this points to what was argued previously: women become a vulnerable, captive labour force. In this context, the concern of whether women are unaware or uncritical of the conditions under which they have decided to do homework arises. This issue of women’s own perception of choosing homework as a work option was not addressed in the home-based literature.

5.4 The Changing Geographical Experience of Doing Homework

Interconnected to the role of gender relations in constraining women’s decision to do home-based work, are the ways in which gender relations of power help to maintain women’s association with the private sphere and in doing so help to keep women both spatially tied to the home and socially isolated from external interaction outside the home. As discussed in Chapter Four, I am conceptualizing homework as one of the many work arrangements that help to reinforce and reproduce the hegemonic ideology of women’s

appropriate place as the private, domestic sphere. In doing homework, many women experience geographical isolation and/or increased isolation if they once worked outside the home. Below I discuss how the women in this study experienced geographical social/spatial isolation as a result of transforming the home into the site of both paid and unpaid work. Secondly, I discuss how these women have tried to resist the dominant gender relations of power which try to keep women in “their proper place” through strategies used by homeworkers to minimize their isolation.

5.4.1 Social and Spatial Isolation:

What emerged strongly from discussion with these homeworkers is the spatial and social isolation women experience by being located in the home. Referring to Table 5.3, of the fourteen homeworkers with children and the three without asked about isolation, eleven with children and one without agreed that they feel both socially and spatially trapped within the home and one without children felt isolated only sometimes. These homeworkers, one without children and one with older children respectively, describe the isolation they face working in the home:

Irene: I feel trapped very much in that I don't have an awful lot of contact, particularly with other women. So, therefore, I really don't know how women think that much anymore. When you're working in an office you all chit chat and you all talk back. Sometimes I feel absolutely starved for female companionship.

Rhonda: I feel isolated in a way that you're working by yourself, you know. There's not somebody to help you or somebody to talk to.

Table 5.3: Social/Spatial Isolation

Participant	Do you experience social/spatial isolation?
1	no data
2	yes
3	yes
4	yes
5	yes
6	yes
7	yes
8	no data
9	sometimes
10	yes
11	no data
12	yes
13	yes
14	no
15	no
16	no
17	yes
18	yes
19	no
20	yes

I suggest that homework is more onerous than going out to work because there is no spatial separation between paid and unpaid work and this contributes to increased geographical isolation. As this woman said:

Rosa: I've done both [working at home and outside], this is the most exhausting work I have ever done in my life. Go out to work, come home, you get the major break because you're changing your scenes. I'm not 24 hours!

Interestingly, in the case of this woman, her paid work is done from twelve midnight to three o'clock in the morning; therefore, it may be perceived that she has sufficient time to leave the home during the day. However, her day is filled up with domestic work and consequently, she still cannot find sufficient time to leave the home. When she was working outside the home she worked more hours but the fact that she left the home for paid work gave her that opportunity to get out of the house.

The social and spatial isolation faced by the women working in their homes is also evident in responses to the questions regarding the challenges and difficulties women face working from home and specific disadvantages of doing homework. This homeworker's response was typical:

Sue: I'm not saying it's always easy. 'Cause sometimes it gets really lonely. As much as my husband is supportive he doesn't know how lonely it can be at 2:00 in the afternoon some days.

These homeworkers, who recently worked outside the home before doing homework, pointed specifically to the geographical isolation that homework has caused them to experience:

Rita: The disadvantages are that you're not in the work place everyday seeing the people you work with, doing the things you would do with the

people you work with, the social aspect of it's certainly not the same [pause]. You're in the house all the time so you're, it's just getting out. I find sometimes at the end of the week I just want to get out of the house because I've been there all week.

Nicole: Oh of course I feel trapped...But God Bless them [men], they don't realize what its like to be stuck in this house 24 hours a day. Sometimes its been really hard.

Therefore, the majority of homeworkers reported experiencing geographical isolation as the home space was transformed into the site of both paid and unpaid work. These findings support Costello's (1988) conclusion that female clerical homeworkers regard the social and spatial isolation they face doing home-based work as a significant disadvantage. Further, these results parallel Dyck's (1995) conclusion that disabled women in the home experience shrinking social and geographical worlds once the home becomes a place of both home and work spaces.

The hypothesis that homework is one of the many work arrangements used to reinforce and reproduce the hegemonic ideology of women's appropriate place as the home is supported by the findings. For instance, women's geographical experience with homework is one of isolation and being tied socially and spatially to home and in doing so reinforces women's traditional place as the subordinate, private sphere and thus sustains prevailing gendered relations of power. The fact that female homeworkers are isolated and experience a shrinking geographical world has significant consequences for them. Women become dislocated and hidden from society and this can ultimately keep women in a vulnerable, disempowered position. This point confirms my previous argument of women becoming captive labour force and is consistent with arguments made by such

scholars as Christensen (1988b, 1) who claims, "...working at home creates an invisible work force that is easily exploited..." And further by an working class homeworker from this study:

Mary: In one way if you're not there [in the office] you're not connected. So, like if you want to find our like say about new contracts or you want to find out what's going on in the field, you miss, you miss out on that.

In the case of this study, four homeworkers indicated that they did not face social isolation and spatial in doing homework. In one case, these inconsistent findings may be explained by the length of time spent working at home. This is evident in the following exchange:

Q: Do you feel socially and/or spatially isolated within the home?
Anne: Not yet. I've only been here since May [in total four months at time of interview].

Another possible explanation for this inconsistency in the findings may be that working outside the home as well as in the home allows some homeworkers relief from the social and spatial isolation of being confined to the home. This is supported by the three other homeworkers' who did not experience feeling isolated. As this homeworker illustrated:

Carla: I have the best of both worlds because I go in to work so I have the social aspect of it and then I work at home where I don't have the social aspect of it.

Further, one of these three women illustrated how both working outside the home and family activities allows for social and spatial interaction:

Carol: No I don't feel trapped because I go out a lot. I guess it helps going to a few clients, going to her office, that helps. I think we're so busy we've got four kids so we're out a lot anyway. So you feel like you're almost never home sometimes. So I don't feel like that. Maybe for somebody that wasn't so busy they might feel trapped.

Although these reasons may explain why these women do not feel isolated, it is interesting that a clothing designer who also works two part-time jobs outside the home (which she took in order to help overcome her isolation) continues to feel socially and spatially isolated in the home. If her response is compared to another homemaker's, who works outside the home and does not feel isolated, what emerges is how the context in which women are doing homework causes them to experience homework and its related conditions in different ways. In these two cases, the circumstance under which they are doing homework comes into play in causing one woman to feel isolation and the other not to even though they both worked outside the home. In these two situations, job enjoyment, the presence of pets, and the extent to which the woman can lessen and deal with the isolation play a role in contributing to differences in experiences. The women experiencing isolation stated:

Q: How do you feel when you are working at home?

Tania: Well, when my kids were at home it was okay because I would get together with their friend's moms. Then I'd be with people and it was fine but home the kids are gone all day, everyday, and your friends get part-time jobs, it changes the whole situation. I almost got depressed, like what sort of purpose in life.

Q: Did you miss working outside?

Tania: I missed it I guess after my kids went back to school because the day are long but before then, I probably got a little tired of doing the jobs that I was doing, you know, it was time for a change.

On the other hand, this homemaker not experiencing isolation noted:

Carla: I love my home and I have my cat and believe it or not, he's amazing company...I think because I enjoy it so much [her job], sometimes it's not like working because I like doing what I do.

A common theme in the interviews was the means by which women tried to resist, to a certain extent, the feelings of spatial and social isolation. Various strategies are used by the homeworkers to overcome the geographical isolation of working in the home. Of the fifteen women asked how they overcome isolation, all had specific strategies to help minimize the isolation they face. These strategies ranged from, simply calling up friends on the phone, going for a walk, visiting friends/having friends come over to visit, belonging to various home-based work or woman networks, and being in contact with other homeworkers. These homeworkers describe the various ways in which they minimize the isolation of being in the home:

Julie: How do I overcome the loneliness [pause], I pick up the phone. You know how I overcome the loneliness, to be honest with you was I had hired help. And I found because I work in my basement and my office is just downstairs I needed the motivation to have somebody else there with me and I think part of my success is because I have somebody there with me. She was right there with me and it was great, someone to talk to.

Q: Are you in contact with other women working in the home?

Julie: Absolutely, yes! We have a home-based business network. Home-based business it's lonely, you get that lonely side of it.

Laura: This girlfriend I have who is working at home, called me one day and she said, "Now I understand why you got involved with the church group stuff and you have people over all the time." Some days I e-mail my girlfriend in Hamilton and say I need someone to talk to and that's it. With my husband working so many hours it's hard, he comes home and he wants to tell you about his job and it's like I don't want to hear about it. I just don't want to hear anything about work. In the summer, my girlfriends and I try to get together once a week for lunch. I do it at someone's houses and I bring the kids and we all sit and gather.

Irene: We [husband and self] belong to a business network where there's females and I have a good friend who runs a bookstore downtown and when I get to that stage of thinking I've got to have some female contact I'll go down and have a cup of tea with her or whatever.

This homeworker purposely goes into the office every so often to maintain some sort of social contact. She stated:

Katy: I'm in the office every couple of weeks to get my mail. When I do go in I try to arrange either meetings, but as well let people know I am going to be in the office and, "Do you want to go for lunch?" And I think, you as a teleworker have to make that extra effort to have that social contact.

It is necessary to deal with the geographical isolation by spatially leaving the home and socially interacting with other people in order to try and resist dominant relations of power. For instance, by dealing with their feelings of isolation within the home, these women are trying to resist the capitalist and patriarchal pressure of keeping women tied to the home. Therefore, by getting out of the house and trying to minimize their isolation they are trying to transform the existing isolation they are experiencing. This homeworker confirms the importance of dealing with the isolation:

Nicole: If I wasn't the kind of person I was I probably wouldn't be able to overcome feeling isolated. Just open the OH I'm coming in, you know. I say to Fred [husband], "I'm going, today is mine, good bye." Finding that time is critical, like it's not there like I would like it to be because of what I was used to. You have to find it, I have to make it. It's not like you can go to the doctor's and have a physical because you've got three kids there, you know what I mean. You have to plan and fortunately, I'm the one who books the appointments so I plan sometimes, but it's hard.

Unfortunately, the strategies used by these homeworkers to minimize isolation are minor forms of resistance. For instance, by continuing to work in the home and as argued homework reinforces the gendered relations of power, then these short-term "solutions" in dealing with isolation have long-term less positive consequences. That is, these minor forms of resistance help them deal with the prevailing gendered relations of power at work

in a minimal way, but does not challenge it in a way which would lessen the power inequality in continuing to relegate women to the private sphere.

Does the geographical isolation the majority of homeworkers experience in doing homework play a role in women's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with homework? Interestingly, only four of the fifteen women satisfied experienced no feelings of social/spatial isolation. The other eleven women satisfied with doing homework experienced geographical isolation. Evidently, the factors of social/spatial isolation did not counter their general positive evaluation of homework. This disadvantage was frequently mentioned by the homeworkers in the interviews, but did not offset their positive feelings towards homework. This is confirmed in the following response given by a homeworker who acknowledges her feelings of loneliness, but she continues to remain generally satisfied with homework. She noted:

Sue: My overall homeworking experience has been good...and lonely.

A possible reason for this contradictory relationship between satisfaction and difficult conditions experienced doing homework, such as isolation may be, as argued in a previous section, that women have internalized traditional ideas of what it means to be a good mother and/or wife. Therefore, they are prepared to put up with difficult working conditions, such as social/spatial isolation, as long as they believe it is what is best for their family. This point is confirmed by the woman quoted above:

Sue: [In deciding on a job] it just always comes down to what we [husband and self] is the best case scenario [for raising our child].

All four homeworkers dissatisfied with homework face social/spatial isolation and this factor may have played a significant role in their overall dissatisfaction with home-based work. This was definitely the case for one dissatisfied homeworker, who emphasized her strong feelings of being trapped within the home throughout her interview. As she stated a few times, “I just want to get out of the house” (Rosa).

5.5 The Status of Home-Based Work(ers)

As outlined in previous chapters, women’s work in the private sphere of the home is devalued due to the ideology that the work done in the home; that is, domestic work is not “real” work because it is done in the private, unproductive sphere and it is not done for a wage. As hypothesized in Chapter Four, women’s paid work in the home will be devalued because of the views that the home is a domestic, non-work, non-wage earning sphere. The devaluation women face is also evident in the interruptions they face doing homework. Lastly, the devaluation of women’s work in the home causes certain homeworkers to experience devaluation by being exploited through unpaid work and expenses. In this section then, I hope to illustrate how gender relations of inequality continue to play a role in devaluing women’s work, regardless of whether it is paid or unpaid, and in the process reinforces the patriarchal, capitalist ideological and material separation of the home (private) and work (public) sphere. The devaluation women face working in the home is illustrated by looking at misconceptions about homework(ers), the continued domestic expectations placed on homeworkers by their family when doing paid

work in the home, the interruptions women face while doing homework, and the unpaid work involved in women's paid work.

5.5.1 The Devaluation of Home-Based Work(ers):

Women working in the home experience the difficulty of dealing with societal misconceptions of what it means to work in the home or to be a homemaker. This is evident from the responses of all the homeworkers. These quotes are typical of the misconceptions that homeworkers face as a result of the dominant societal ideology that homework is not "real work":

Linda: They [people] view it as a joke. That you're not working. Exactly. It's your not driving to a place. It's you're just playing as if you're a little girl - you're playing school, playing house, you're playing work. And it's like but I'm not.

Irene: I find that it depends on who the people are. If again, it's very much a male-female thing. I find that my female friends and acquaintances say, "Oh, it's absolutely great, you know, you're an entrepreneur. You're really working hard, you're altogether, you're so organized," you know all this. Whereas the men say, "Oh she's just a glorified housewife."...I think mostly the misconception is that most people, if you say you work in the home, most people assume you don't have the intelligence to work at a real job. That's the difference, working in the home isn't a real job. Like some people will say to me, "Oh, where do you work?" And I'll say, "Oh I work from home" and they'll say, "Oh, well don't you have a real job?" I think that's a misconception. I don't think where you work is important. So I think people have to understand that working at home is a real job. It's not you're part-time or you're really a glorified housewife, or whatever, *it is real work* (my emphasis).

Rhonda: Oh, the misconception is that you're sitting around watching T.V. all day, you're smoking and eating popcorn and the children are left running wild.

Elysa: ...the neighbours across the street will say, "She doesn't have a real job, she doesn't get up and go to work everyday."

This homeworker further illustrates the devaluation of homework by comparing the views she experiences when working in the home as opposed to when she works outside the home. As this homeworker states:

Mary: I have to admit that one thing about the homework aspect is that when I do go into work they give it more seriousness. Like my friend, she gives it more seriousness than if you do it just at home. She called me once around 9:00 and I go, "I can't talk now I'm in the middle of doing some work on my computer" and she seemed kind of like shocked. I think they view it as less of a real job if it's at home on your computer - Oh, it's just something you're doing on your computer. I think people view it less seriously. I don't know how one could do it, where it could be given the respect it deserves because it is very worthy work.

The dominant ideology that homework is not "real" work also begins to surface through the continued expectations placed on women by family members to be a full-time mother and/or wife. Although the women were not asked directly about such expectations, general responses to other questions illustrated how family members devalued their paid work in the home. The devaluation of homework by family members through their continued expectations of their mother and/or wife helps to explain why homework is not viewed as being "real" work. For example, in the following responses, one homeworker's husband continues to expect his wife to have supper ready for him, another husband questions whether his wife had done paid work during the day, and third the homeworker faces devaluation by her children who want her full attention:

Carla: My husband, he's a great guy but he thinks that dinner should be on the table and I said to him, "Honey, I'm working, think of me as being at work and he has actually accepted it more now. Initially, it was a disaster because he just thought while you're at home, you know start dinner.

Mary: Well I have to admit that sometimes he [husband] has that kind of a bias [because she is at home during the day she should be able to do her

part of the chores]. I'm glad he is not here now [laugh] to hear that. Sometimes he'll say, "Oh my goodness, you only got this much done." And I go, "But I was working at the computer all day." Or he'll say, "You didn't clean the kitchen." 'Cause the kitchen is my area [to clean].

Carol: I think some people think that you're not really working. I hear it more from my kids, like it's you're not really at a job so what are you doing. So, they come home from school and they just have a cold or something and say, "Mom why are you working?" They don't understand that you're actually working because you're at home.

This last quote suggests how at a young age, the ideology that "real" work is done in the public sphere and not in the private sphere is engrained in the minds of these children. Further, it seems that the ideological notion that claims in order to do "real" work one must be in the public sphere is at work in the husbands' and children's responses. The problem homeworkers in this study face concerning the invisibility of their paid work in the home supports the findings of Christensen's (1993) study. The hypothesis that women's paid work in the home will be devalued through misconceptions of the home as a domestic, non-work, non-wage earning sphere is supported by the results of this study.

Devaluation of women's work is further evident in the interruptions women face when doing their paid work. Referring to Table 5.4, of the eighteen homeworkers asked, fifteen claimed that they faced interruptions to their paid work. These interruptions included children's demands and external interruptions from friends and other family members. Of the fifteen homeworkers, seven faced child care interruptions and external interruptions. These quotes specifically illustrate the sorts of child care interruptions faced by homeworkers who have younger children:

Q: What do you find most difficult about doing homework?

Table 5.4: Interruptions Faced by Homeworkers

Participant	Child Care Interruptions	External Interruptions
1	yes	yes
2	yes	yes
3	no	no
4	no data	no data
5	yes	yes
6	N/A	no data
7	yes	yes
8	N/A	no
9	N/A	yes
10	no	no
11	no	yes
12	no	yes
13	yes	yes
14	yes	no
15	N/A	yes
16	no	yes
17	no	yes
18	no	yes
19	yes	yes
20	no	yes

Carol: Just the noise, they [children] want me for something, they wanted this or that, and one wants help with their homework or one has to go somewhere. So then if I'm going to start again I won't start till nine at night and work until eleven or twelve.

Q: Do you find yourself waking up early in order to get your work done?

Carol: I did in the summer, I woke up early say 6:30 and they used to sleep in till 8:30 or 9:00 so I used to work for a couple of hours in the morning.

Q: What do you find most distracting about working in the home?

Laura: The kids, I think. Some days I just can't satisfy them and it all seems to be the same day that you've got so much to do that you've got to get out right away.

She further goes onto comment about other interruptions or distractions that she faces throughout her workday:

Laura: I thought working at home would be easier and in some ways it is; however, in many ways it isn't. There are a million distractions - kids, laundry, dishes, messy house, people calling to chat or ask for things, people assuming I can drop everything to accommodate their needs.

These responses illustrate the type of external interruptions these homeworkers with young children are faced with:

Julie: You know, people don't respect you for your time. You know, you get a knock at the door, "Hi you got time for coffee?" and it's like, "No, I'm working now." And then also people get on the phone, people come in for a coffee and then the phone ringing continuously. And they start, "Oh, I'm sorry I definitely interrupted your day."

Carla: And I find because I work at home, the only negative issue with working at home is that people think you are at home, that you have time to take a phone call and when I'm working I don't want to do that. When I'm working I wanna be just like I'm at work. So that's why I got call display. I don't want to be interrupted...Well, if I was doing copy typing work that would be fine but because I have earphones in my ears, I don't work unless I got my earphones in my ears. Like if I'm sitting talking on the phone, I'm not getting anything done.

Therefore, the hypothesis that the devaluation of women's work in the home causes family and friends to disrupt their paid work is strongly supported by the findings. These findings are consistent with specific studies by Costello (1988; 1989) which illustrated the devaluation homeworkers face through the interruptions to their workday. Consequently, as argued previously, because the work women do in the home is not considered "real" work, this ideology also affects women's paid work in the home. This issue of interruptions to homeworkers' workday as a result of children will be further discussed in Section 5.10.

In further addressing interruptions to women's workday it is necessary to examine the differences of homeworkers' experience with interruptions. The findings suggest that the age of children has a significant effect on the interruptions homeworkers face. For instance, those women facing child care interruptions and external interruptions all have younger children who are at home during the course of the day while those homeworkers solely facing external interruptions, have young school-aged children. Therefore they are able to concentrate on paid work demands during the day without the potential for child care interruptions. For one homeworker with younger children the fact that she uses day care on a full-time basis prevents her from not experiencing child care interruptions. The age of children in influencing women's experience with interruptions is recognized by this woman with two children, aged nine and fourteen who compares the interruptions she presently faces to when her children were younger:

Q: So you're saying that your children no longer cause interruptions to your paid work?

Tania: Well no, because [before] you might want to do something or you knew that you're getting ready for a craft show or something and you knew you wanted to get these things done and the little ones will say, "Come play with me."

I suggest that these interruptions faced by homeworkers also result in significant implications for women's paid work. These include a lack of time for paid work and a work situation accompanied by increased pressure in doing paid and unpaid work. This homemaker with a younger child illustrates how continuous interruptions to her workday results in a lack of time for completing paid work demands:

Mary: I guess another challenging thing is and it is pretty frustrating for me is he [son] does demand a lot of attention now. And I think he might even be a bit envious of the computer. Like you lift him up and then you just lose your place. Sometimes it feels like I've worked all day but I haven't accomplished anything because there's been so many breaks - it's been fragmented.

The devaluation of women's paid work is also evident in the exploitation they experience through unpaid labour and unpaid expenses related directly to their work. Of the nine homeworkers asked if they perform unpaid work, seven confirmed "Yes." Six of these homeworkers were from the working class and one occupied a position in the petite bourgeoisie. The unpaid labour performed by the homeworkers included: no pay for pickup and delivery, no pay for waiting time for delivery trucks, no pay for overtime work, no reimbursement for expenses, such as buying food for children and traveling expenses related to their paid work. This working class homemaker, working on a piece rate basis, stated:

Anne: I find that there are other things in the office if you have to take time to fill out paper work you are being paid for it, but here at home you aren't you are only being paid for the work that you input on the computer.

Q: Are you paid for waiting time of the delivery trucks?

Anne: No.

Further, this homeworker receives no extra pay for the extra amount of time she puts in because parents do not view her time as valuable. She stated:

Jennifer: They're [parents] supposed to be here by 1:30 and often, you know, they come at 2:00 or , you know, they'll go grocery shopping on the way home or they'll go home and have lunch and then they'll come. And you're not paid for that extra time.

Lastly, this working class homeworker working for a day care agency reflects on the unpaid expenses she incurs as a result of her paid work. The money for such expenses comes out of her own pocket. This woman is worth quoting at length as she recognizes the exploitation she faces by her employer:

Rhonda: It's a lot of unpaid labour that goes into this job. I mean look at the food to begin with. I don't buy my kids cheap food, my kids get good food! As for the fruit, you can open the fridge, there's every fruit under the sun. If he asks for a pear, he gets it. If he asks for an apple he gets it, tangerines he gets it, grapefruit he gets it, peaches he gets it and the kiwi he'll get it. They [employer] actually tell you, you've got to change, you can't have one thing all the time. You've got to have something different everyday. And we don't get paid for the food. We've all kept quiet and grumbled behind the scenes. I guess when you look at it you get the chance to work, you get to get kids, you know, to work. And at the time you think, "Ah, that's nothing," but as time goes by you look at it and say, "Hey, I'm being had here."

Unlike these six women from the working class, it would be interesting to see whether the other five women who occupy the same class experience similar conditions. The two homeworkers who did not face unpaid labour or expenses were from the petite bourgeoisie class. Therefore, the one homeworker who occupies the petite bourgeoisie

class is a less privileged member of this class in not being able to ensure she was reimbursed for labour time and expenses incurred.

The hypothesis that homeworkers face devaluation through unpaid labour and/or unpaid expenses in their paid work is supported by the seven women asked; however, the results are only suggestive. Unfortunately, only a small number of women were asked this question. More research is needed on this form of devaluation of homeworkers; a form which was also only minimally addressed in the homework literature (Costello 1989).

A point which arose infrequently in the interviews, although was supported by the study carried out by Costello (1988), was whether women themselves, at times, feel they are not doing “real” work. For instance, this homemaker, when discussing her job security, compared homework to paid work outside the home. She stated:

Julie: My job security [pause], I think it's more secure than a lot of people that have “real” jobs.

Further, one homemaker stated that her husband “helps out” with the domestic work somewhat. She justifies his limited help and her increase in domestic work by indicating that she “just doesn't want sit around all day long.” This same point is made by another homemaker:

Nicole: Fred [husband] helps around the house, they've [division of labour] changed a certain amount, but of course I'm going to accept more household responsibilities, I mean I'm not going to sit around, I'm not the type of person to sit around and do nothing all day.

In addition, two homeworkers seem ashamed to admit that they actually work in the home. As this homemaker stated:

Linda: I meet people at functions when I'm at a company party or whatever, and they will ask, "What do you do?" Right away I say, "Well I'm home with my kids" and then I kind of say, "Well I do kind of do this too," you know, and I'm like damn I should just come out and say, "I have my own business." I'm almost perpetuating this little myth, it's just a little fun, little thing that I do on the side. I don't give it enough credit.

Although not a common occurrence in the interviews, this finding is still worth noting because it points to women's socialization into acceptance of this myth that work at home is not "real" work and also to the experience of devaluation itself. This finding suggests that additional research is required on this significant issue to see whether homework and its related ideologies have also caused women to view their waged work as not "real" work and consequently, to contribute to such a myth.

As outlined in Chapter Two, Mackenzie's (1989) view that homeworkers' adjustment of space and time has implications which are potentially significant for restructuring the relations between home and work, and could lead to the restructuring of the relations between women and men, is not true of all homework. This was confirmed in other studies of home-based female workers (as illustrated in Chapter Two) and by the findings of this study. Firstly, from the above findings, it seems that in doing homework not all women are successfully challenging or contesting the conceptual division between home and work. The research findings show that women's paid work in the home continues to be given the same undervalued status that is associated with the home sphere and often becomes associated with women's traditional domestic role. This point is strongly supported by the misconceptions reported by all homeworkers concerning the paid work they do in the home and the interruptions which occur because their work is not

seen as being “real” work. However, from the interviews women were seen to show various levels of resistance against the patriarchal conceptual division by challenging the devaluation of women’s work. This homeworker’s response illustrates the strategy used in challenging the devaluation of her paid work:

Rosa: Lately it’s not been too bad, people are getting used to it [her doing paid work in the home] ‘cause I will say, “Piss off.” Well yeah you’ve got to let them know, “These are my work hours.” Just ‘cause I’m sitting on my own chair and not in an office chair doesn’t mean I’m not working.

Other strategies used by the homeworkers included constructing social boundaries, that is, setting rules about interruptions for children, prioritizing paid work and type of interruption, ignoring the interruptions, and letting paid work go. These strategies are described in the following responses:

Jessica: I may just say, “Hang on one second” and deal with the kids. There are times when I’ve also said to the kids, “Not now.” Even if I’ve been interrupted in the phone call and they ask me something and it’s like totally dumb, you did not need to interrupt me for the at I just say, “That can wait.” I think the only way they can learn that you have to prioritize, you have to recognize what is important.

Nicole: In dealing with interruptions I use time out for kids. Well that’s our discipline management in this home.

Elysa: Yeah, you have to sometimes you just have to not answer the door, or you have start, you know, if they come say, “Gee, I’m really sorry you know but I’m busy right now...”

The last strategy used in dealing with interruptions is that of homeworkers letting paid work go. Although dealing with interruptions by putting work aside was not a common response it is a concern because in doing so women’s paid work suffers, and because their work is placed second to family demands, and the time they spend on paid work is

constrained. Of the ten women asked how they deal with the interruptions to their workday, two indicated that their work was put aside. As this homemaker stated:

Carol: Usually I would tell them to hang on until I was finished what I was doing and I would have to stop and go back to it later, sometimes it's pretty frustrating.

This finding of women putting aside their paid work is consistent with writers, such as Beach (1989) who contends that paid employment is not women's top priority when faced with conflicting demands in the homework situation.

These strategies vary in terms of women's ability to challenge the devaluation women's work in the home and in the process demonstrating that successful paid work can be done in the home. For instance, some women are able to challenge the devaluation in a way which allows them to transform the meaning of the interruptions so that they can do paid work and in the process educate others about the meaning of home-based work. Others strategies, such as putting work aside may help women directly deal with/minimize the interruptions they face in doing homework; however, such strategies do not resist the ideological views of homework which ultimately leads to its devaluation. Rather, they contribute to the consequences of doing homework and how such a strategy is disempowering for women whose paid work is being reinforced as secondary status. This aspect of strategies used in challenging the devaluation experienced by homeworkers was not examined in the home-based work literature.

Major forms of effective resistance against the conceptual division between home and work are addressed in Anderson's (1996) study whereby conventionally segregated spheres were contested and renegotiated with the incorporation of paid work into the

home. However, unlike the women in this study, his sample of artists lived in houses spatially arranged and designed intentionally to incorporate both residential space and work spaces. Therefore, these houses were built as a place of both home and work and this allowed the physical and social boundaries between home and work to be contested and negotiated.

Secondly, the above findings suggest that women are not challenging the relations between women and men in the home and society. For example, in doing homework, women are being attributed the traditional inferior status of a housewife because they are located in the home sphere and thereby not seen as “really” working. This reinforces the gender division of power because men continue to be seen as the ones with the power and to actually have greater economic and political; that is, they are doing “real” work in the public sphere where power in society is derived. Women homeworkers continue to be the ones situated in the home, where their traditional subordinate status within the private sphere is reinforced and reproduced. Therefore, contrary to Mackenzie’s (1989) claim, the relations between women and men are not being successfully contested. This points to what has been argued previously: homework is a work strategy which forces women back into the home (although not perceived as such by most of the homeworkers) and in doing so reinforces their inferior position within society at large and in the family.

The devaluation of homework is apparently a problem experienced largely by women working at home versus men working in the home. In home-based work literature discussed in Chapter Two, it was illustrated how men working in the home do not experience the same devalued status as experienced by women homeworkers (Lozano

1989). This finding was also supported by some of the interviews in this study. For instance, this self-employed worker who works at home with her husband provides first hand experience of the different status attributed to men and women working in the home:

Irene: When people come here they assume that Jack [husband] owns the business, you know, he is the boss. People expect to see a man at the head of the thing. Like we get sales people come here and they talk to him even if it's female sales persons, funny enough, they'll always talk to him. They don't talk to me, they talk to him. So if the two of us sat there they'll look at him rather than look at me. So, I think it's more accepted that he works in the home.

Clearly, the view of the home as a site of domestic work and not a place of "real" work has affected women and the paid or unpaid work done by women more than their male counterparts. Since men working in the home seem not to experience this form of devaluation, these preliminary findings questions how we value women's work both inside and outside the home.

Considering that all of the homeworkers interviewed faced devaluation of their work, it is interesting that this factor did not appear to affect the majority of women's general satisfaction with homework. I would have thought, since this factor was a common concern and disadvantage of women's homework experience, that it would have influenced the majority of homeworkers' satisfaction with homework. Perhaps, the degree to which they experience devaluation influences whether this factor diminishes their satisfaction with homework. For instance, those women dissatisfied may face devaluation more frequently or it may be more severe than those satisfied with doing homework. This is confirmed by this day care worker who experienced devaluation on a daily basis by the

parents of the children in her care. This dissatisfied homeworker is worth quoting at length:

Jennifer: I find people basically think that you have the IQ of lint if you're at home with kids and that somehow having had children and looked after them has resulted in some form of brain damage and they treat you like dirt and they want Mary Poppins at 50 cents an hour, and the lack of respect is astounding. I always knew that sexism existed but it wasn't until I was at home that I realized how sexist people were, it really comes out of the closet. You know when people say things like, "Oh well, you're at home" it's like your time is free, you can do anything to meet their demands and their demands are really quite extensive. And the people who care for them aren't valued either. First, because they're a woman and it's just seen as I think any ways an extension of the mothering role.

In comparison, this satisfied homeworker noted:

Laura: I don't really experience a lot. People joking and will say, "So what soap opera did you watch today," or "What were you doing today." And when my husband comes home, once in a while he will ask, "What did you do all day."

In comparing the situation of these two working class homeworkers, it seems that the different degrees of devaluation they face in doing home-based work causes their experience of the same class position to differ in terms of intensity of devaluation experienced. This intense degree of devaluation experienced by the dissatisfied day care worker is similar to the other day care provider's experience whereby her time is not considered valuable by parents bringing children to her:

Rhonda: She brought her child at 9:00, she made sure to bring the child on the dot. She told me she won't be later then 7:00 - she walked up at 7:30, never said to me, "I'm sorry, there's traffic" or whatever, just assumes it's no problem and that I have nothing better to do.

It appears that the type of work these day care workers do causes them to experience severe devaluation compared to other homeworkers. That is, their paid work is devalued

because firstly, it is done within the confines of the home; and secondly, it is work that is seen as an extension of their mothering role, as pointed out by the self-employed day care provider above. Constant devaluation was also experienced by another dissatisfied homemaker who faces devaluation of her paid work on a constant basis through daily interruptions from friends and family:

Rosa: But here I am working, everybody knows what hours I work, but it's totally irrelevant. Rosa's home, you can call her, you can ask her to do these favours or, you know you're out all day, she's at home you can ask her. Rosa's home, Rosa's home, yeah. As I was saying it all boils down in my mind anyway to respect. And that you don't get it as much as you like. How many people would drop in for a coffee if you were sitting at your desk at work. Or call you and say, "Listen, run out to the store for me..."

5.6 Gendered Relations within the Home

The home-based work literature indicated that women doing homework continue to remain primarily responsible for child care and household responsibilities and in some cases their responsibilities actually increased. I am conceptualizing the social relations of power within the home as reflecting and expressing patriarchal relations through the maintenance of women's primary responsibility to the household, and the gendered ideology that housework is woman's work regardless of the fact that women are doing paid work in the home. In this section then, I discuss the ways in which homeworkers struggle to reduce their share of unpaid domestic work in order to do paid work. Further, I discuss how homework is a paid work strategy which reproduces and reinforces the maintenance of women's primary domestic role by homeworkers conforming to existing gendered divisions of labour within the home.

5.6.1 Resisting Gendered Relations of Power within the Home - Or Not?:

Given the complexity of gendered relations of power working within society it is difficult to imagine contesting this system of oppression through the structure of gender relations within the home. The following analysis illustrates, homeworkers' renegotiation of domestic responsibilities in doing homework. Referring to Table 5.5, only ten out of 20 homeworkers use or have used in the past specific strategies to renegotiate their domestic responsibilities. The two main strategies used both presently and in the past by the homeworkers in order to do paid work in the home were child care and/or domestic help.

As these homeworkers indicated:

Elysa: With a big house and we were in the big house for about seven years before this one, and that was when the boys were at home and I did end up with a cleaning lady because I did feel that I did a lot of training in my home and I wanted the home nice, I didn't feel I had to do it. And my work time, if I could make more money working than cleaning toilets, to me it was worth paying someone to do that while I would be on the phone doing something to me that was more valuable for my time.

Sue: That [putting child into day care five afternoons a week] enabled me you know to work all afternoon.

Julie: I also have hired help as well, I have a cleaning lady that comes in. I thought okay, if I could just get someone to come in and do my cleaning then I could spend more time on my business. And so I have that as well, hired help that comes in and cleans once a week...And, I did have help with the children. When I first joined, I had two neighbours who joined at the same time, so what we did was we shared, we interchanged child care. I mean, it's the best thing, we all have a common goal, we all want to do the same thing so we would either do it where one would take the children and then we'll just stay home and work or the three of us would get together and you know, we do phone challenges with each other and one would do the child care and then switch.

Table 5.5: Strategies Used in Renegotiating Domestic Responsibilities

Participant	Strategy Used
1	-shares domestic work with partner
3	-child care
8	-hired domestic help
11	-child care* -hired domestic help* -shares domestic work with partner
12	-child care
13	-child care
16	-child care*
17	-child care *
18	-child care* -hired domestic help
19	-child care

*strategy used in past

Further, two homeworkers are able to renegotiate their domestic responsibilities by sharing the domestic work with their partners. Presently, only eight out of the ten women are able to renegotiate their domestic responsibilities within the home in order to do paid work. These results suggest that women's material resources, for example being able to afford child care and/or domestic help, or to arrange child care with other women contribute to differences in women's ability to reduce unpaid domestic work. Homeworkers' abilities to renegotiate their unpaid work was not an issue discussed in the homework literature.

What is necessary to note concerning this renegotiation of unpaid work, is the different degrees to which homeworkers are able to renegotiate domestic responsibilities. For instance, Laura's parents take the children once or twice a week versus Rita who uses day care on a full-time basis. Therefore, Laura's degree of renegotiation of child care within the home is different than Rita's. These differences relate to the different degrees of resistance to the gendered relations of power in the home which places the burden of domestic work onto women. Being able to lessen the burden of domestic work in order to do paid work equals a significant level of resistance against the gendered division of labour in the home. However, although I maintain this form of resistance is significant (in that it is a step in improving conditions of homework for women), it is not successful in altering the overall division of labour within the home as discussed below.

Further, the ability of certain women to afford such help illustrates that homeworkers are able to compensate for their class position to differing degrees. For instance, those homeworkers able to resist the gendered relations of power through the

renegotiation of domestic work have a class advantage over other women in the same class position because they are able to afford such services or being able to arrange with other women, parents, or family members to help out and in this way create more positive conditions of homework. Other women in the same class positions as these homeworkers are more constrained in what they can do to make their homework conditions better. For example, Jennifer's working class position is the same as Elysa's, Carla's and Carol's class position. However, Jennifer's household income is insufficient to purchase child care or domestic help or to arrange other sufficient strategies. As this homeworker stated:

Jennifer: I contribute about a quarter the family income, but it's the money that keeps us above the poverty line...And it's still not enough. I mean that's what makes me crazy...And I'm not talking extravagant needs, I'm just talking basics, it's food and clothing for the kids, keeping my eleven year old car running because we can't afford a new one.

These findings do not support the hypothesis that homeworkers, in order to do paid work in the home, reduce their share of unpaid domestic work. Possible explanations for these contrary findings are, as indicated above, many women may be constrained by their inability to afford such material privileges as child care to improve their working conditions. Second, the difficulty in resisting the gendered relations of power within the home where women continue to be primary responsible for unpaid work and the social construction of the roles of women and men in the family (women - domestic provider, men - breadwinner). The behaviour of these homeworkers, in not being able to successfully renegotiate their domestic responsibilities, is consistent with this ideology that domestic work is women's work. The following quotes show how this ideology is shared by husbands and is engrained in women themselves:

Q: Does your husband help you with domestic chores?

Jennifer: In fits and spurts, if I scream at him then he'll realize this is an issue and maybe I should. But, by in large, no.

Q: Why you think he doesn't help?

Jennifer: He has testicles, they fall off if he does housework.

Int: [laugh]

Jennifer: At least that is my theory. Most of my friends have stayed at home with their kids and they said the same thing that prior to having children there was some semblance of equality in the division of labour in the home, not totally by any means, women still by large did most of the work, but once you have those children, I don't know, it's like you turn into June Cleaver which would be okay if most men earned enough that you could be June Cleaver and you hired help to just clean the house and all you had to do is look after the children but that's not the way it is. I think more men are closet sexists though they wouldn't admit it.

Jessica: I do most of it and I think I've probably tended to be really just wishy washy on this area and I should expect more of them [her children]. But they got so many things they want to do, you know, they've got a job, they've got to socialize, and they've got all those things. I'll ask them to do things, I'll say, "You know, I'd really want you to do your bed, clean the bathroom, but I probably have to remind them about three or more times before they get done between now and the weekend, so I don't have a whole lot of really strict ideas about responsibilities. And the rest of the time I just do it cause I honestly don't mind.

Also, the patriarchal relations within society and the process of socialization into dominant ideologies about women's roles are so influential that women have internalized these responsibilities as their own response to gendered relations of power within the household.

These internalized ideologies are evident in this woman's response:

Irene: I think women tend to be workaholics when it comes to housework because we are our own worst enemies. We have far higher standards and I think that's one thing that women ought to do is if your husband says, "Well I'll do the dusting" you have to accept how he does the dusting. You can't say, "Oh you missed that corner" or "You should do this." You've just got to close your eyes and say, "Well he was doing it, let him do it." But, unfortunately, having done that we are also a breed that takes the responsibility for it...I think women tend to expect more and women are great ones for complaining, you know, "It's not fair I do all the work,"

but I think that's only because we allow ourselves to do all the work. And because we make work.

Further evidence of women's internalization of such responsibilities was presented in previous sections discussing the values and priorities women hold.

Lastly, women's limited ability to reduce their share of unpaid work results from the dominant gendered relations within the household which maintain the inequality between women and men in the family. The findings that women continue to maintain primary domestic responsibility regardless of the fact they are doing paid work supports the point raised in Chapter Four that the gender division of labour within the home has formed the basis of women's oppression in patriarchal, capitalist society (Luxton 1986), and indicates why women's struggles to reduce their share of domestic work have limited impact on domestic inequality.

As argued in Chapter Four, regardless of whether women are resisting and transforming the division of labour in the home, this has limited impact on the overall gender division of work in the home. Nineteen women were asked (only Katy was not asked) to describe the overall division of labour within their household. The majority of women (sixteen in total) indicated that they do most of the domestic work. Therefore, regardless of the fact that four of these homeworkers are presently using child care, they continue to be responsible for most of the domestic work. Two homeworkers, as indicated above, share the domestic work equally and one woman indicated that her sole responsibility with domestic work is dealt with by her paying for the domestic help hired.

Therefore, homeworkers are not getting an equitable enough division of labour within the home to allow them to concentrate on home-based work.

Interestingly, the circumstances under which homeworkers are doing paid work, such as presence of children, age of children, and length of time working from home, are not associated with significant variations homeworkers' position in the gendered division of labour within the home because the majority experience an unchanging division of labour. Only material conditions, such as being able to afford day care, or another form of child care arrangement have allowed certain homeworkers the ability to resist (to a limited extent) the gendered relations of power within the home by reducing the time they spend on unpaid work. This form of resistance results in minimal change in that the general conditions of domestic inequality within households continue.

Does doing homework reinforce the gender division of labour within the home? To answer this question, we need to know whether women were doing/would be doing less domestic work if they did not work in the home (Table 5.6). Of the thirteen women asked, eight claimed they were doing or would be doing less domestic work if they worked outside the home and five stated their domestic responsibilities would remain the same. These responses illustrate women's reflections on what the gender division of labour would be like if they worked outside the home:

Carla: If I was working outside the home, I'd be doing less domestic work. It would be shared between me and my husband...It's not shared because I'm at home.

Rosa: If I was working outside the home it would be easier to convince others to help [laughs]. Yeah, but seeing as I'm home people assume I have nothing to do but sit.

Table 5.6: Amount of Domestic Work: Working at Home Versus Working Outside the Home

Participant	Doing the Same Amount of Domestic Work Versus Working Outside the Home	Doing More Domestic Work Versus Working Outside the Home
1	*	
2		*
3	*	
4	*	
5		*
6	*	
7		*
8		*
12	*	
13		*
15		*
16		*
20		*

Q: So who's responsible for the domestic chores in the house?

Tania: You're looking at her!

Q: Why?

Tania: Husband doesn't get home until eight [o'clock]. And he has work to do when he gets home as well, so I end up doing it all or most of it.

Q: Is that okay with you?

Tania: There are times no, because we used to when we were both working full-time and had no kids, we would just say, "Okay, fine that's just two hours, we're gonna clean the house," and we would do everything together. But when you're at home you do more housework. I mean it's not that he doesn't help out. I think it is expected because I'm at home. Yeah, because I know the kids expect it because I'm at home that I pick up after them.

What begins to surface from these responses is that homeworkers feel that they are doing more domestic work in the home simply because they are "at home." Therefore, the reason that women are "at home" is used to justify making them do more of the domestic work. This is an aspect of place discrimination in that women are being taken advantage of (in terms of increased domestic burdens) because they are "at home" and not in a "conventional" work location. This is confirmed in the following responses:

Q: Since you began working at home, have you taken on any more domestic work from when you worked outside?

Laura: Probably yes. I probably do more as far as cleaning goes than I did before just because "I'm at home". Like a lot of times my husband calls and want me to go check this, can you do that, can you do this, cause he knows I'm at home. So I go and say, "You do it, I've work too, right?"

Linda: We used to share the cooking now it's virtually all my domain just because "I'm home", right. It's [domestic work] fallen to me since I've been home because "I'm at home".

Interestingly, for another homeworker who indicated that she does more domestic work now than when she was working outside the home, this was one reason (related to the reason of not wanting commute because it limits her time at home) why she decided to

work in the home. She feels that this arrangement has been good for her relationship because her husband is now not mainly responsible for the domestic work. Ironically, this woman when working outside the home was resisting the gender relations of power by not conforming to the traditional division of labour within the home. However, this major degree of resistance caused tension between her husband and herself because she was going against the dominant expectations of what it means to be a good wife by not conforming to gender relations within the home that maintain women's association with domestic work. Now working in the home and doing more of the domestic work has lessened both her resistance and at the same time the conflict with her partner because she is now conforming more to her traditional role in the family by doing more of the domestic work.

The hypothesis that homework is a paid work strategy used to reinforce the gendered division of labour and the subordination of women within the home is supported by the findings. The existing dominant ideology and practice of the gendered division of labour, and the place of women and men in the family home at work in maintaining these socialized roles continue to reinforce the relations of power in society. Homeworkers maintain a primary role in domestic responsibilities and for the majority of women this results in increases in those responsibilities despite of doing paid work in the home. This finding is consistent with other scholars' findings, such those reported by Allen and Wolkowitz (1987), who found that homeworkers' families continue to expect the services of a full-time housewife regardless of the fact that they are doing paid work. Therefore, the claim that the conditions under which women work in advanced, industrialized

countries are changing rapidly, that for instance, the family is increasingly a site where new forms of gender relations, including parenting are negotiated (Kobayashi et. al 1994) does not correspond to the situation of the majority of these homeworkers. For these women, the restructuring of home space through the delegation of household tasks is minimal. The social relations of domestic work are not contested or negotiated with the introduction of paid work into the home space, but rather fall onto women's shoulders (and for some even more than if they worked outside). This helps to maintain the complex and demanding roles women are confronted with in patriarchal, capitalist societies.

The common response given to why homeworkers feel they are doing more domestic work when doing homework than if they worked outside the home reflects the devalued status attributed to paid work in the home. Possible explanations for the contrary views of those few women who feel that homework does not affect the amount of domestic work they do, is that gender relations of power and the division of domestic labour remain fixed regardless of whether they work at home or outside the home. This homemaker's response illustrates what the gender relations of power in the home are regardless of whether this woman works at home or works outside the home:

Jennifer: He [husband] says that he would do more work if I worked outside the home, but I don't buy it, not for a minute. When I was working 60 hours a week a lot of that was out of the home, certainly half of it was out of the home and it didn't make a difference. I would come home and I would be completely exhausted and the dishes would not be done and the living room you couldn't walk across the living room without breaking your neck and half the times the kids would still be awake.

Interestingly, only two homeworkers who were generally satisfied with homework experienced an equitable division of labour within the home. Therefore, this factor did not

appear to have an influential effect on the women's positive evaluation of homework. Possible explanations for this puzzling finding is that one, as already discussed, women may have internalized the ideology that domestic work is women's work; therefore, they may be prepared to put up with such consequences of doing homework. Second, for those women who experience no change in the division of labour within the home, this is not a condition of homework which may cause dissatisfaction because these women are faced with a similar situation if they work outside the home. This point is confirmed by four out of five women who are generally satisfied with homework and feel they would be doing the same amount of unpaid work.

5.7 The Work Space

For homeworkers, the home is no longer solely a place of family life. The home space becomes the site of both home and work lives. As outlined in Chapter Four, the social construction of space or in this case the home space; that is, being a locus of family life, will cause women difficulty in appropriating existing space for paid work. I am conceptualizing the extent to which women homeworkers are able to appropriate space in the home for waged work and in the process resist the power structures within the home is done so in a minimal way. In this section, I discuss the degree to which women are able to resist the hegemonic construction of space; that is, the home as a place of family life and their degree of success in transforming the home space through the construction of a work space. Next, I discuss the importance of the work space for women and how

women's ability to (re)structure the home space relates to women's ability to do paid work in the home.

5.7.1 (Re)Structuring the Spatial Environment:

To what extent are women able to re-organize domestic space to try to facilitate paid work in the home? Table 5.7 illustrates the type of work space women have set up within the home and the spatial modifications that occur in the home space to accommodate economic activities. From the findings it is evident that the degree to which women manage space or have (re)structured the space within the home varies. Out of the 20 homeworkers, eight had an exclusive work space which was solely used for their own paid work. Figure 5.1 is a typical example of how women claim space exclusively of their own for their paid work. Figure 5.2 shows a typical arrangement in which women's office is in a specific location in the home, but their work space is also used by other family members. For six of the women the spatial modifications made to accommodate paid work integrated work space with living space (a room used for other family activities). For instance, these women used bedrooms, storage rooms, and living and dining rooms as their work spaces. These women "chose" these rooms by default; that is there was no other available space to do paid work, or they needed to be located close to family in order to fulfill family demands. These responses are typical:

Linda: I chose this room by default. The desk got moved down there when we had my second child because the desk was in the room that then became her bedroom so down it goes. And then I needed a place to store my candles and that was the only room. That became the room because there was no other choice.

Table 5.7: Type of Work Space Constructed

Participant	Exclusive	Exclusive/ Shared	Work Space Overlaps with a Living Space	No Work Space
1			*	
2	*			
3	*			
4				*
5				*
6				*
7			*	
8	*			
9	*			
10				*
11	*			
12	*			
13			*	
14			*	
15	*			
16			*	
17		*		
18	*			
19			*	
20		*		

Figure 5.1: An Example of an Exclusive Work Space

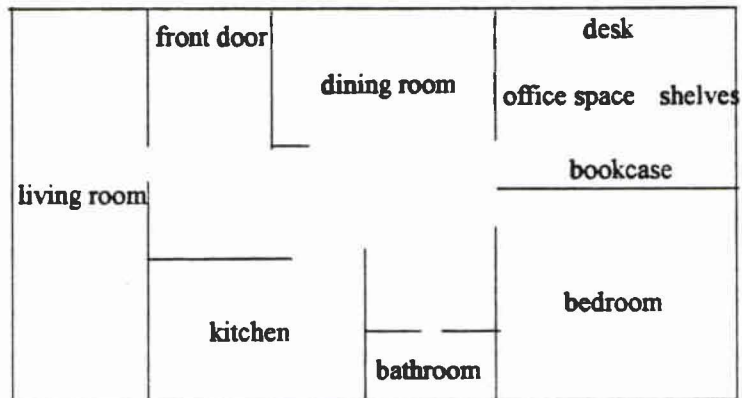
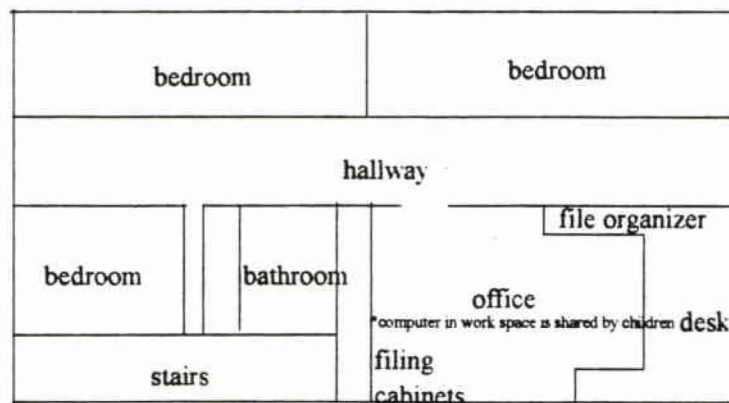


Figure 5.2: An Example of an Exclusive/Shared Work Space



Laura: We thought about moving it down in the basement but I guess it's not practical. If my kids are around me, they are happy. Like if the baby can see me and she's playing, she's happy. So if I was at a separate room, then I wouldn't be able to work unless they were sleeping. Or if she was sleeping I'll be able to work but if she's in the same room with me she's usually satisfied. They are both at the stage where you don't want to leave them playing on their own.

Figure 5.3 shows a woman's work space located in her dining room. Four of the 20 women made no spatial modifications to the home space and used various parts of the home for their waged work. Figure 5.4 is a mapping of a day care provider's home, she uses various parts of the home for her paid work without having any specific set up to accommodate paid work. For these women there was no spatial boundary dividing home from work. These women could not afford to construct an adequate paid work office, or had no choice but to work from these rooms because it was all that was available to them. Two of these women were day care workers, one woman was an artist, and one woman relied solely on the telephone for doing paid work. These women are constantly surrounded by the interaction and demands of home and work due to the lack of spatial separation between unpaid and paid work. As this homemaker indicated:

Irene: It's all one, it all runs into one. I don't know where one ends and the other one begins, it just all runs in together. Yeah, it's very, very difficult because it all rolls into one. Home becomes work and work becomes home.

The hypothesis that gender relations played out in the social construction of spaces that made it difficult for women to appropriate exclusive space within the home for their paid work needs is strongly supported by the findings of this study. Eight homeworkers were successful in spatially separating home and work lives through the construction of a

Figure 5.3: An Example of a Work Space Overlapping with a Living Space

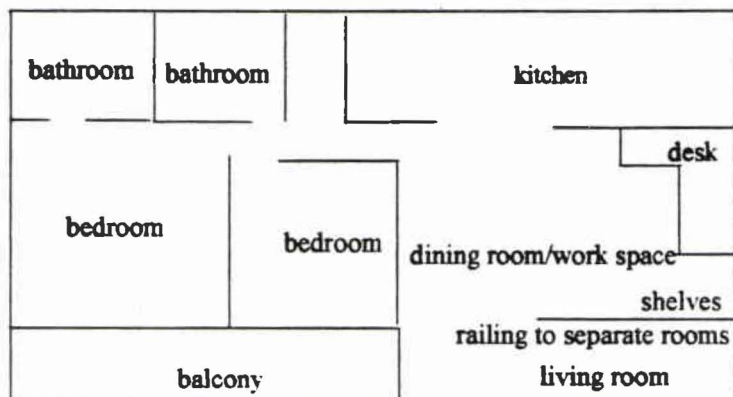
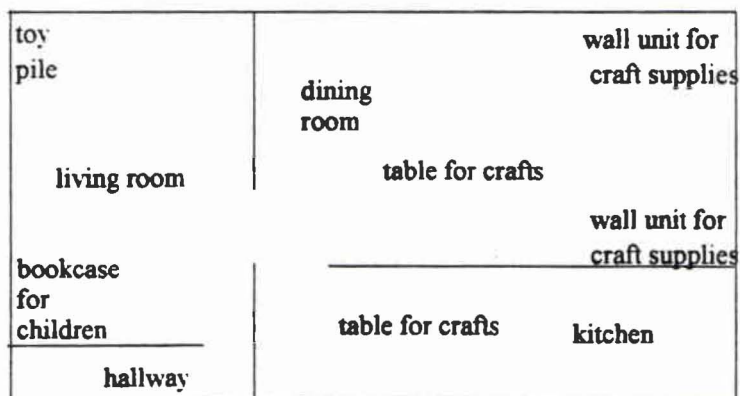


Figure 5.4: An Example of Having No Specific Work Space Set-Up*



* Entire first floor is used by children

separate work space. These results are consistent with the home-based work literature which indicates that women rarely have “room of their own” (Christensen 1993; Allen 1989). The social construction of the home as a place of family life, a construction which assigns women a role of domesticity, continues to act in complex ways in shaping women’s experience of homework. The results suggest, that for the majority of women, not able to set up a private space for work, their experience of homework is not one where they are able to challenge the spatial relations within households. For the twelve homeworkers unable to claim exclusive space or to spatially modify the home space they are faced with inadequate conditions for doing paid work in the home. In this context, doing homework is in part the outcome of patriarchal relations within society at large and the power structures within the home reinforcing the ideological and material construction of the home as a place of family life. An argument posed by Miraftab (1996) further explains women’s inability to create space within the home. As a result of women’s work at home being viewed as an extension of their domestic work, women themselves are often not convinced of their need for work related construction in the home and it is unlikely that they would consider, for example adding space or appropriating existing space. This claim is further supported by the findings discussed in Section 5.5 concerning the devaluation of women’s work in the home by others and also by women themselves.

Women’s inability to create space within the home is also influenced by the conditions complicating their class position. That is, women’s differing experiences of their specific class positions had implications for the women’s ability to create space. Those women able to construct an exclusive space within the home space for paid work

have a class advantage over others in the same class in terms of modifying their homeworking conditions. For instance, Julie who occupies a position in the working class, is able to modify her paid work conditions in the home by being able to afford to buy a house that had a work space:

Julie: When I started this business, we didn't live in this home but when we bought this home, we bought this home with my business in mind so that it had a separate meeting room downstairs, it has a separate washroom, it has a separate office so that when I do my training and my meetings...

On the other hand, Linda, who is also part of the working class, is unable to afford to modify her working conditions by reconstructing/claiming a space within the home for doing paid work. As this homeworker noted:

Linda: My sewing machine and the clothes are in my office. Because with three kids we've got hand me down clothes and people give us stuff. So there's stuff piled up all around me [laughs]. I kind of thread myself through the clothes boxes over to my desk. And it's old wood paneling and it's dark carpet in there. I think, "Geez, if only I could liven this up."...I chose this room by default. The desk got moved down there when we had my second child because the desk was in the rec. room that then became her bedroom, so down it goes. And then I needed a place to store the candles and that was the only room. The other room was a playroom.

Evidently, some homeworkers in the same class are in a more privileged position by being able to construct an adequate work space .

Women's ability or inability to appropriate space within the home is linked directly to different degrees of resistance to prevailing spatial relations within the home. For instance, those women who were able to construct a separate, well-equipped work space are resisting patriarchal, capitalist pressure to a certain extent because they are challenging the meaning of the home by claiming a separate space which was (and is) rarely provided

to women. These women are trying to transform existing home space in a way that enables them to do paid work - a major form of resistance. For those women not able to claim adequate space, their level of resistance against the dominant patriarchal, capitalist construction of the home is minimal. Resistance against the socially constructed meaning of the home space is important for doing homework and improving homework conditions because it allows women's work to be taken more seriously in that they are challenging the dominant ideology of the home and women's roles as mother and wife, by claiming separate paid work space and assuming a less traditional role. This point is confirmed by this homeworker's typical response who found that more legitimacy was attributed to her work at home after people saw her work space:

Rita: My neighbours just don't understand this [homework] at all. They ask me, "Well you're home, why aren't your children with you?" [laughs]. But I once I found a couple of neighbours have seen the office and once they see it they actually said, "This is an office." And then I think they get a better idea of what you do - that it's really work.

In addition, this notion that separate work space allows women's paid work in the home to be taken more seriously by clients is confirmed in the following response:

Linda: I have to pretend as if I am in a beautiful office, you know [laughs]. They don't know I'm sitting in my storage room [laughs], it has to be projected as a business. And that's why I need to get them [family] out so I can pretend I have a beautiful office and there's no one else around. And that's hard to do.

What begins to surface in the above comments is the importance of having a specific work space in improving the homework experience for women. This is discussed in the following section.

5.7.2 Assessing the Importance of a Work Space in doing Home-Based Work:

The importance of a work space became a common theme in the interviews. Homeworkers were not directly asked about the importance of a work space; however, general responses to other questions illustrated the connection between work space and women's ability to do homework. One woman illustrated how the difficulties of her present homework situation are minimal compared to a past homework experience which taught her the importance of the home office:

Rita: I found that I learned that if I'm going to be here I have to forget about all that other stuff out there. I have to stop looking at my house walls and think, "Oh, I would like to wash those curtains, I really should get that carpet washed," or, Gee, I'd like to throw that comforter in the wash," sort of thing. I had to separate all that. I'd find myself looking around wanting to do that and I went through the growing pains of learning to separate. I found that pretty early when I set up the home office. I think what's helped me in being successful is I had a job where I needed a home facility. I went into this with very, very strict rules and regulations in my mind that this was my work office.

Evidently, this woman's success in doing homework stems from her ability to create a separate work space in the home. Contrary, to this woman's minimal conflict between home and work in the home sphere, other women's lack of an exclusive work space for paid work intensifies their stress with the homework situation as a result of the lack of the spatial separation of home and work. As these homeworkers noted:

Laura: My phone will ring about ten at night and I mean who is it expecting me to be home. But then it's listed in the phone book just under my name...Sometimes I feel like I just want to shut the doors to the family room and say, "Okay, it'll go away."

Mary: There are other activities that are going on at the same time I am trying to do my work. The T.V.'s on, the stereo could be on, you're a stone's throw from the kitchen, the phone's right there...One thing that

would make things easier is if I had the office in a separate space, not in the middle of a living space which is prone to interruptions. I am always feeding, changing the children, which I like doing, but takes away from my work time and concentration on work-related tasks...But no, it's not an ideal position at all with the constant traffic.

The difficulty doing homework in an inadequate working space is also evident in this woman's response:

Linda: You know a nicer office would make a big difference [laughs]. I mean like I said I'm stuck in the storage room. Being down there it's like my little dungeon almost, really it is. It's like I have to make my calls down there. So maybe that's part of the calls, you know, the avoidance because I'm thinking, "Here I go, down into the dark hole."

The interrelation between work space and ability to do homework is also evident in this woman's comments on not having a work space in the home:

Rosa: I know it would be different if I had a separate room to work in from the house because then it would be, I'm in the office - don't bug me.

Lastly, this woman, who now has an exclusive work space, comments on the difficulties encountered when she did not have a work space located in another room of the home:

Elysa: The first few months I worked off my dining room table and it just didn't work. I found with little kids it would be easier [to have a separate paid work room] and I'm not the type if I'm making phone calls I don't like people listening to me [laughs]. So then I got so I had a room that I could leave as a mess and shut the door and nobody could listen to me. When working in the dining room, I have to put it [work] all away and then you'd have to, you now, have dinner and then you'd get it out again.

The importance of a separate work space was further illustrated when twelve women were asked the sort of advice they would offer to other women contemplating working in the home. A common response was to construct space within the home where paid work can be done. Six of the twelve women gave this response. These six women

also had an exclusive work space and therefore, knew the importance of having a work space. The importance of this space is illustrated in the following responses:

Julie: I think the most important thing that I did for my business was to set up a special work area, so that you go to the work area . If you didn't have a work area you're working at your home then you would find the distractions like if I happen to be in the kitchen and the phone starts ringing and I didn't manage to go down to my office I'm not focused but if I'm in my office, I'm focused.

Sue: A lot of people can think that you work from home, you can just pick up the phone, you know. But you have to have an office. A lot of attention should be made to what you want in your office and ideally your office should be at the front of the house that way the rest of your house that way your family can have an all out war in the living room and you can sit in your office and just work away and not worrying about the phone ringing and hearing that kind of garbage in the background.

This quote accurately summarizes the problems which may occur if homeworkers are not well-equipped with a work space. The following response of a homemaker with three younger/young children without an adequate work space supports this homemaker's claim:

Linda: ...but then I'll hear a little argument or disagreement brewing and then suddenly, "Wha...ha...boom, boom, boom!" And I'm like what's going on up there!" And if I'm finished a call, okay, but sometimes I'm on a call and I can hear this in my other ear and I'm really torn.

These findings begin to suggest how having an exclusive work space is an important consideration when bringing home and work spaces together because it enables women to do paid work and balance both productive and reproductive work in the home. The following section, further discusses the connection between work space and ability to balance home and work.

Apparently, not being able to successfully construct an adequate work space did not affect the homeworkers' overall positive assessment of homework. Possible suggestions for this result is that women may feel they should simply make do with their situation and adapt to the conditions they are faced with. As this woman with children, dissatisfied with her work space, yet satisfied with homework states:

Mary: You know, you need to make do with what you have.

Another possible explanation relates to a point raised by Miraftab (1996). Although the majority of women recognize the importance of a work space, "It could be argued that internalized patriarchal values cause women to devalue the legitimacy of their spatial needs and therefore make few spatial modifications" (p.71-72). As a result, women may not weigh in this factor when assessing their overall satisfaction with homework. This argument raises new issues of concern regarding whether women themselves have internally devalued the need for their own work space, and if so whether this affects the degree to which women spatially modify the home in order to do paid work.

5.8 The Homeworker: Blending Roles as Waged Worker, Spouse, and/or Parent

As discussed briefly in Chapter Two, women with children are faced with a dilemma arising from gendered relations of power; that is, to simultaneously work as a full-time mother and/or wife and to participate in the labour force. With the integration of home and work spaces through homework, women try to ease the difficulties of such a dilemma; however, in the process they become faced with multiple roles on a continuous basis. For instance, the home as a place of work does not eliminate the juggling act of

managing home and work lives, rather it intensifies the pressure of both waged and unwaged work because of the constant and daily interaction of both roles. As outlined in Chapter Four, women doing homework, and in the process combining home and work lives, will face interaction between their multiple roles as separating the two roles becomes very difficult. Further, in doing homework, women will face conflict as a result of the interaction of their roles.[4] This illustrates how such a work strategy does not do away with the difficulties of trying to combine home and work. In this section, I discuss the degree of interaction homeworkers' experience and the potential for conflict and/or tension to occur over such interaction.

5.8.1 Interaction Between Home and Work Roles:

With homework, distinct spaces of home and work integrate into one sphere. Therefore, homeworkers are faced with the interaction between home and work spheres and the potential for their roles to conflict. First, I discuss the degree to which homeworkers face interaction between their roles. What is obvious from discussing the issue of interaction of roles with homeworkers is the intense degree to which the majority of homeworkers face interaction between their intertwined roles of paid worker, mother and wife. Referring to Table 5.8, of the eighteen homeworkers asked whether their home and work roles interact or whether they have the ability to separate them distinctively, eleven reported their roles interact and seven stated they are able to separate their roles. The interaction of the homeworkers' roles was evident between paid work,

Table 5.8: The Integration of Home and Work Lives

Participant	Interaction Between Home and Work (yes/no)	Conflict Produced Between Home and Work (yes/no)
1	no data	yes
2	yes	yes
3	no	yes
4	yes	yes
5	yes	yes
6	yes	yes
7	yes	yes
8	no	no
9	no	no
10	no data	yes
11	no	no
12	no	no
13	yes	yes
14	yes	yes
15	no	yes
16	no	yes
17	yes	yes
18	yes	yes
19	yes	yes
20	yes	no

children, and domestic responsibilities. These various interactions are evident in the following exchanges:

Linda: I feel like I've got you know ten things to do. And it's like okay, the laundry, the cooking, the shopping, the cleaning, the kids, now the phone calls I have to make [paid work responsibilities] It's always in the back of my mind these ten things juggling...I've got to get the laundry done, but oh, but that woman, I gotta call her back, but the kids wanna go to the park and then what about supper. You know even women who work out of the home get these problems but they have the ability to leave the home during the day.

Julie: You see I wear three hats. I take off my work hat and put my mommy hat on. And then I also have a wife hat. Sometimes I wear all three hats at the same time.

Q: Would you say your roles as worker, spouse, and mother interact with one another?

Rosa: A bloody pretzel [laughs]. You know its like a braid it just all goes together and it's Rosa has got to be, Mom when this one needs something, she's got to be listener, and that's usually within a space of two maybe three minutes. So you don't have like I said the drive to work and back which I always found was great because you would go from home mode to work mode and it gave you a nice transition time.

Of the eleven homeworkers experiencing interaction between home and work roles, one woman does not have children. This homemaker's self-employed business which includes people coming and going within her home and her trying simultaneously to do domestic work, such as cooking and cleaning causes her to experience such interaction.

As this woman stated:

Irene: It's [home and work] all one, it all runs into one. I don't know where one ends and the other one begins, it just all runs in together.

The hypothesis that women in doing homework and combining home and work lives face interaction between home and work lives is strongly supported by the findings.

This suggests that in doing homework, women are not doing away with the dilemma of being both waged worker and mother and/or wife, rather they are reinforcing it through daily interactions of their various roles. There are a few women with children who, when asked whether their roles interact with one another, responded that they are able to separate their roles through the course of their day. A possible reason for these inconsistent results is that for these homeworkers with children the degree to which they combine home and work lives is limited. For instance, one homeworker uses day care on a full-time basis and the other uses day care daily for a half day. Therefore, these women, with the material resources to purchase child care are able to minimize the degree to which they are confronted with the interaction of their roles. As this home-based worker with younger children stated:

Rita: No not at all [roles interacting with one another]. No, because I have a totally separate area away from where they would be and they're not here when I am working...And if the children are sick I have backup daycare organized that will come in so I don't have to do that.

Other possible explanations include length of time working from home. For instance, one homeworker has been working at home for over seventeen years and has a 21 year old son at home. For this woman, the combination of length of time at home, the age of her son, and being at a stage in her life course whereby she is no longer inundated with child care demands, have allowed her to experience separation in her home and work roles. This point is confirmed in the following exchange:

Q: Do you find your roles interact with one another?

Elysa: Oh yeah, when the kids were younger I can relate to my roles interacting with one another. The kids are always noisier when you're on the phone 'cause you can't, you know smack them or whatever

[laugh]...Things have become easier now that they [children] have grown up.

Length of time working at home has also helped another woman lessen the interaction between home and work roles. For instance, this homemaker working from home for ten years does continue to face this problem; however, it has lessened over time:

Julie: Yes, my roles impose on one another. Things have gotten better. Again, experiences taught me to deal with it better.

Evidently, such factors or the combination of such factors, as material resources, length of time working from home, and age of children, has lessened the degree to which these women are confronted with their multiple roles. This helps to explain why these homemakers experience less interaction between their roles.

A contradiction in one homemaker's claim that home and work lives do not interact with each other is evident in a response given to another question posed. For instance, the separation of her roles is evident in the following exchange:

Q: When you are working are you thinking of doing other chores?

Carla: No, when I feel like it, I don't know, when I feel like it. If I don't feel like doing it, then I don't do it.

Q: So if you're working would you say, "I should stop doing this now and do some laundry?"

Carla: No, because I'm working and that's a priority. Like I've explained to you, It's always going to be there and work is not always gonna be there if you're trying to make somebody satisfied with work, then you have to take priority. And work around the house is not a priority with me anymore.

Q: Have you always had this attitude?

Carla: No, but then I had a nanny for a while as well which made it very easy for me. So when I was working up in my office she was looking after the kids and taking care of all these things for me. And then, when she left, my attitude changed, it was like, it can wait. It can wait, it's just not that important and it's always gonna need to be done regardless of whether you

do it today, it's still gonna need to be done again tomorrow, so it can wait.

However, this woman's response to whether she had a typical day or if her workdays vary indicates a different situation than the above. Instead of being able to separate her roles, her home and work roles interact throughout the day:

Carla: No I don't [have a typical day]. Because I have a lot of other things that I have to fit into my days so it's whenever I get an opportunity to sit down and do it...I have various household chores that I do. I mean, laundry, I'm doing laundry today and changing beds and I just basically work around my day.

Unlike her response above, her home and work lives do interact with one another. Therefore, this woman may perceive her roles as more separate than they are in practice.

Three out of the four women without children do not face home and work interaction in doing home-based work. For the three homeworkers able to separate their home and work roles the interaction of their roles are minimal to none existent. In doing homework, these women are solely faced with the demands of paid work and at the end of their workday they are able to leave their paid work demands behind. Therefore, the degree to which these women are faced with the interaction of dual roles is limited. This point is supported by the following homemaker who reports through a description of her workday how she manages to keep her roles separate:

Terry: I start [my workday] at 8:00 and work until 12:00. And then I work again in the evenings. I leave here usually around 6:00 or 6:30 and I'm usually home about 9:30. So at 12:00 I finish my work until 6:00. In between that time I can get my house clean, I can do my laundry, I can get the groceries or whatever.

Further, the minimal interaction of these women's is also a result of the absence of children.

Comparing the quotes of one homemaker with children to one without children distinctly illustrates the difference children make in causing homemakers to face interaction of their roles. This homemaker with children illustrates the complex ways her roles interact with one another:

Linda: It's horrible once a customer calls me and I've got my kids around or I've got friends visiting. Then it's like, "Oooh, yes..." and then he goes, "Oooh." And I'm like, okay I'll run downstairs and then the little guy runs after me bangs on the door, "Mommy, mommy, what are you doing? Let me in." And I'm trying to make a business call you know finish this business call. Then I have to say, "Well, I'm sorry I'll have to call you back...And with me family imposes in a way that it makes me feel like I gotta do these things but I don't want to do them cause I'd rather be with them [family]. I feel more of a need, of an obligation and that's where the stress of, "Come on you've got to do that part of your job." But what about this?"

This woman's response suggests difficulty of concentrating on one demand while feeling guilty about not responding to the other. This creates a constant pressure for women to respond to their dual roles and in the process causes them to be caught in a vicious dilemma; that is, whenever she is doing one thing she feels guilty not fulfilling other demands. This homemaker without children illustrates the ease of separating her roles compared to the above woman's experience of doing homework with children:

Terry: There's always something that I could do. I'm somebody who likes to be finished. I like to be able to say that, "Okay, now I'm off " But there's always something I could do. If I was sitting here if I thought about it I'd think, "Okay I could go and do this." You need to turn it off. I know this sounds sick but I am really organized and I have a recipe file box. so I decide okay this is what I'm going to do today. I'd have three by five cards and with what needs to be done. so what I do in the morning is I get up and I pull my cards out and when that day's empty I'm done. when I don't have any cards left over then I'm finished. That's it, I don't have any problem walking away from it.

These quotes begin to raise the issue of being able to mentally separate roles when doing homework. In contrast to Linda, this latter homeworker and the following two quotes illustrate how they are able to mentally separate home and work roles. The former homeworker eases her mind about doing paid work by working from home and the latter homeworker organizes time in a way that allows her to be able to mentally separate her roles:

Katy: I find my roles imposing on one another no different than when I would have worked downtown. The nice thing about working at home is all of a sudden you think of something you think, "Geez, I forgot to do that" and it might take you five minutes, instead of worrying about it if you worked in an office...It's off your mind for the rest of the evening, you don't have to worry about it.

Elysa: I tend to think more about [paid work] than actually do it. I think it becomes and it can become a 24 hour thing in your mind, but I have learned to, now that it's seventeen years later, to really be able to close the door.

This finding partially supports arguments of writers, such as Christensen (1993; 1989) and Costello (1989) who contend that the inability of homeworkers to mentally separate their roles (or have psychological boundaries) creates a constant pressure they must contend with. The difficulty in mentally separating roles was also evident in the study undertaken by Ahrentzen (1990). Evidently, the degree to which this claim holds true, must be based on specific factors of the homeworker's situation, in this case, the presence of children.

This finding of mental boundaries also brings up a point raised in the homework literature concerning physical boundaries (work spaces) in trying to help women separate their paid and unpaid work roles. Six of the eight women with an exclusive work space do not face interaction between their roles and one faces a lessened interaction between

home and work lives over the years. Therefore, these findings suggest a strong connection between the ability to separate home and work lives and having an exclusive work space. The above findings also supports Christensen's (1993) claim that the chance for family and work responsibilities to interact is heightened especially for homeworkers with young/younger children and who do not have an exclusive work space.

What sort of conflict is produced from women's roles interacting with another? The following section discusses the type of conflict or tension produced as homeworkers' roles interact with another.

5.8.2 Interaction of Roles: Facing Conflict:

Is conflict produced as a result of the interaction of homeworkers' family and paid work roles? Referring back to Table 5.8, fifteen of the 20 women asked face conflict when their roles interact. Of the fifteen homeworkers, two did not have children and thirteen were homeworkers with children. Of these fifteen homeworkers, those asked whether their roles interact with one another, all but three confirmed that their roles interact. Therefore, interaction of home/work spaces and conflict produced between the roles are strongly interrelated. That is, when home and work roles are interacting homeworkers are faced with conflict between their roles. Further, these findings indicate the conflicting demands of domesticity and waged work when concentrated in one domain, which result in heightened difficulties in doing homework and combining two distinct roles. The conflicts produced as a result of women juggling home and work lives illustrated in the following statements by women with children:

Mary: Like sometimes I feel like it's a constant battle ground. Like I'm trying to work on the computer and then he [son] needs something. Like I don't mind his regular meals, like he needs to be fed a certain number of times a day, like that doesn't bother me. But then sometimes he wants attention like and then I felt so guilty because I want to give him the attention but then I feel like my work is not getting done. But then when I'm doing my work and he wants it I feel guilty because I'm doing my work and he wants it I feel guilty because I'm not being with him, I feel torn. It's like my roles are conflicting with one another.

Jennifer: Well, stress definitely. I don't know, I mean I guess it's how you define conflict. I mean conflict for whom? Conflict for me maybe in terms I'm trying to juggle a multitude of responsibilities and meet everybody else's needs. It would be a conflict in terms of that.

Rhonda: (reflecting back when children were small) Okay you're always late if they want to go somewhere. And it's, "Oh I don't know why Mom takes a job where she knows the hours are so long" you know what I mean. Like they feel that you're not here for them and that's how when I was married and my husband used to just get berserk because they would be a woman that wouldn't come and pick up her child up by 6:00 and by 6:00 we had to go out. See there is a lot of interference. It was very stressful. It even mentally did something to me that I started forgetting things.

Linda: There's all these things and they're turning around in my head and it's like, Okay, I've gotta get that laundry done, but oh, but that woman, I gotta call her back, but the kids wanna go to the park and then I think what about supper...And suddenly, "Oh yeah, phone calls, oh, oh!" And then I'm like, "How am I going to juggle this now?" Okay put this aside. Now I have to put on my other hat and I have to go and get downstairs and be very business like. Switching over - I find that really hard to do.

These quotes succinctly illustrate the increased stress and pressure homeworkers are under when dealing with paid and unpaid roles which overlap with one another in the home space. Two women without children also experience conflict due to the simultaneous interaction of the dual spaces and roles. As this homeworker states:

Irene: And things like if you get to that point where you're inundated with work, you've no privacy in your life because your house is open to

anybody that comes and goes. So consequently, you think to yourself, "oh, there's a good movie on tonight we'll have dinner and we'll put our feet up and watch the movie." That doesn't happen because that phone rings and somebody says, "Can I come up and see about such and such," so you don't have any private life. And it takes certain kind of person to cope with that, a lot of people can't cope with that...The only way to get away from that stress you get in your car and you go away. You leave the telephone, you've got an answering machine, you close the door you put a sign up saying "Closed" and that's it.

Homeworkers also cited conflicts as a result of paid work invading home life. For instance, these women experienced their lives being taken over by the work demands, work invading the home space of family members, and work cutting into family time. As these women stated:

Lynn: Sometimes it can take over your life. Evenings the phone rings I mean for instance, two nights ago my business line rang at quarter to one a.m..People showing up for orders that are supposed to be here at 2:00 and at quarter after three you're still waiting for them, they haven't phoned, you know.

Julie: It also invades theirs [family] as well. I mean my daughter can't come home from school and get on the phone and talk to her friends because I'm running a home-based business and I don't want the lines tied up, with her being on the phone all the time...You are never off when you run a home-based business you're always on even when you're on holidays. I work for myself; therefore, I can't take the time away from work. I can't close my store and expect my customers to still be there when I open.

Laura: There are times like this Monday being a holiday I know I had a job I had to do. So I needed someone else's input before I could do it. So I thought if I get this stuff out to him Monday, he'll need to send it back to me even if I don't get it back until Tuesday at least I'm ready to go Tuesday. So if I work Monday morning my husband would say "It's a holiday why are you working." But it made my life easier on Tuesday and he was with the kids and they are outside so it was easier for me to get it done.

The two former points illustrate the pressure of having a home-based business, such as never having the ability to shut paid work off. The latter quote points to the added pressure placed on homeworkers by family members telling them to stop doing work and spend time with them. This was a common occurrence in the conflicts discussed by homeworkers. This pressure by family members also presumes that women's work is not important - you can simply leave it aside and go spend time with the family. This point also illustrates the devaluation of women's paid work in the home.

Tension between partners was also reported by certain women. Six women indicated that working in the home caused tension between themselves and their husband. One homemaker, who decided to work at home because of the tension arising between her and her partner, who has not been working for several years found that resentment was building up between them because she had to go to go out to work everyday and indicated that the tension remains as a result of her work imposing on her family time:

Anne: Yeah, sometimes my work imposes on time with my husband. One afternoon, we rented a movie the night before and didn't get a chance to watch it so we watched it that afternoon and then I got a call from the office saying they needed something back well then all of a sudden I was getting nervous. I didn't need to but I just felt nervous.

Furthermore, a second homemaker stated:

Carla: My husband does resent me working long hours when I'm really busy.

This quote raises the question of why her husband resents her working such long hours. One possible explanation is that this woman is challenging the patriarchal relations within the home space by not conforming to the dominant ideology of what it means to be a good mother and wife because she is unavailable to meet his needs/demands. This in turn may

cause her husband to feel anger. The type of conflict arising from doing homework was raised only minimally in a few home-based work studies (Costello 1988; Allen and Wolkowitz 1987).

The hypothesis that in doing homework women will experience difficulties such as conflict created by home and work roles interacting in the home sphere is strongly supported by the findings. This interrelation between roles interacting and conflict produced is consistent with the literature on home-based work as discussed in Chapter Two (Christensen 1993; Costello 1988). Although four women do not experience both interaction and conflict simultaneously, they do form part of their homework experience. That is, three women face conflict between their roles, yet their roles do not interact. And one homeworker do face interaction, yet she indicated that she does not face conflict. This homeworker attributed lack of conflict to the age of her children:

Tania: Not anymore, because they are old enough that they do things or I'll just drop it if they want something. Especially the big one is independent so he's okay, the little one sometimes if there's nobody to play with and he wants attention, but my husband's a teacher so summer time, he's around too so we take turns.

This finding was surprising considering the age of Tania's children was similar to that of other homeworkers who do experience conflict. Only four homeworkers do not face interaction between their roles nor do they face conflict. This study partially supports Christensen's conclusion that there are different degrees of role conflict. Two of the four women with children faced conflict and one of the two women with older children continued to face conflict (although the conflict was no longer with children but with trying to juggle household responsibilities and paid work). Because this study has a small

number of women in these two situations, conclusions about degree of conflict cannot be drawn.

Interestingly, the length of time a woman has been working from home does not ease the conflict between home and work roles that these homeworkers face. This woman explains how length of time working from home has still not diminished the conflict between home and work roles:

Julie: I've done this [working from home] for ten years so I think we've worked it all out, but there's many times where you try to run out the door to get the kids to soccer and somebody comes to pick out a toy. You know, and so you know the kids have to learn that business is here, you know you wait and so we're late, you know. Yeah, there are definitely conflicts. I said to my husband it would be a lot easier to just get up in the morning and walk out and go to a job than to try to run a business at home.

This point is further supported by another women's comparison of working in the home with working outside:

Carol: Some people say its harder to have your own business when you have kids, it's easier to go out and work.

From the above analysis it is evident that patriarchal relations of power are at work in causing homeworkers to face increased conflict, stress, and pressure in doing waged work through unpaid and paid work demands imposed on women. Home-based work does not eliminate the difficulties and challenges felt by women working outside the home. Rather, instead of liberating them from socially imposed dual roles or reducing the burden of the double day, homework intensifies the pressure of the simultaneous demands of doing waged and tending to family responsibilities.

How have the difficulties women face in doing homework affected their satisfaction with homework? The majority of women faced conflict in managing home and work lives, yet the majority of women continued to remain satisfied with doing homework. It appears that the conditions homeworkers' experience through the interaction and conflict of their roles was not a major factor in assessing their overall satisfaction with homework. One reason for this contrary finding is that perhaps this sample was more family oriented and had strong family values, as pointed out in a previous section, which caused them to assess their satisfaction of homework based on the advantages it has for their families rather than for themselves. Various related questions arise from this contradiction in the findings: Did women feel that the difficulties of homework were an inevitable part of their roles as mother and wife?; and Did women feel that consequences to their paid work, such as putting work aside, was not an issue as long as their families were content? These questions need to be addressed in future studies.

5.9 The Renegotiation of the Meaning of Home for Homeworkers

As the home becomes a site of both paid and unpaid work the renegotiation of the meaning of home for women is necessary. The home has always been a place of work for women; however, it continues to be a retreat from the world at large as well (Harris 1996). However, in doing homework the home is no longer simply a place of family life, rather the home becomes a place of family and waged work and, as discussed in Section 5.4 and 5.8 respectively, a place where the majority of women face social and spatial isolation, and conflict as home and work roles interact. And further, in doing homework

women have no escape from the world at large or in this case from the world of waged work because they are constantly surrounded by paid work in the home. As argued in Chapter Four, when the home is transformed into the site of both paid and unpaid work homeworkers will directly experience a changed meaning of place, as the home, a place of family life, becomes a site of both paid work and family lives. Through discussions with the women concerning how the changing home space has had an effect on their experience and meaning of place (the home as a place of family life), the majority of homeworkers (nine out of fourteen) reported that they continued to experience the home as a locus of family life. As these homeworkers, not experiencing a changed meaning of the home, indicated:

Sue: As soon as I close my office door I'm at home, you know. I go into the office I'm at the office. It's because I've never really worked outside the home.

Katy: The home would mean the same, you know. Like I know this is my office and I respect it as my office. Like it's almost like it has a big sign on it, you know, Monday to Friday only. This is my office. It [the home] has the same meaning as it did before.

Therefore, the hypothesis that women will experience a changed meaning of the home as it becomes the site of both home and work lives is not strongly supported by the findings of this study. Further, this finding is contrary to the Dyck's (1995) claims that the restructuring of the home space as a place of work will cause women to have a changed experience of place.

Of the fourteen homeworkers asked, only five experienced a changed meaning of the home in which the home became regarded not only as a place of family life but also

of waged work. In contrast to those women who did not experience a changed meaning of the home, these women experienced the home as a site of increased conflict and stress. This point is confirmed by these homeworker who experience increased stress from the home becoming too many things:

Rosa: Right now the home is too many things, it's not what it should be. It would be different if I had maybe an office which could be separated from the home. And here it's not because I sit down at my phone and somebody calls and I'm talking, this is the same phone I work with. So they're overlapping and it's almost like the colours are bleeding into each other. I don't have just a home and a work place and that gets really hard when you can't separate them because you're never free of either one.

Nicole: Well it's everything to me now. You know, to me it's everything, my home is everything to me in every literal aspect you can think of. It's my sanctuary, it's my business, it's my home.

The meaning of the home space for women as it becomes a place of both home and work lives was not addressed in the home-based work literature.

A preliminary explanation I want to suggest for this contrary finding is that for those homeworkers not experiencing a changed meaning of the home, they have internalized the patriarchal, capitalist ideology of the home as a site of family life, regardless of the fact that paid work is being done within this sphere. This is of concern because if paid work is to enter into the home sphere successfully (that is, being noticed by society as being "real" work), a different construction of the meaning of the home is required. Otherwise, the home will continue to be viewed as a place solely for family life. And as a result, the work in the home will not be seen as "real" work, and paid work will continue to be given the same devalued meaning as that given to domestic work. These outcomes are problematic because homeworkers and the work they do will not be given

the status they deserve as waged workers. With the home space being transformed into a site of both paid and unpaid work, the meaning of the home needs to be recognized as a place of both family life and paid work life.

5.10 The Representations of Home-Based Work

There are three dominant images of homework discussed in the home-based work literature. These images are: one, the use of homework as a child care strategy; two, the flexibility in balancing home and work; and three, the personal autonomy of doing home-based work. I am conceptualizing the images of homework as one of the means of reinforcing and reproducing gender relations of power within society at large. It is necessary to assess the validity of these images through home-based workers' actual experience. In this section, I challenge these representations of home-based work by documenting the experiences of these women workers by offering a more accurate conceptual portrayal of homework related to these specific images. Further, I illustrate how gender relations of power help to maintain such unrealistic views of homework.

5.10.1 Confronting the Representations of Home-Based Work: Homework as a Child Care Strategy:

Part of the reason given by all homeworkers with children to remain in the home was for their children and also many women cited advantages of homework, such as it allowed them to be at home with their children. However, through the interviews it became evident that the degree of difficulty faced by homeworkers in trying to juggle children demands and paid work demands simultaneously in the home sphere varied.

Difficulties in combining paid work with family life have already been pointed out in previous sections and include, for instance, interruptions by children to women's paid work, and conflict and stress resulting from home and work lives interacting. These quotes further illustrate the sorts of child care interruptions faced by homeworkers:

Q: What do you find most difficult about doing homework?

Carol: Just the noise, they [children] want me for something, they wanted this or that, and one wants help with their homework or one has to go somewhere. So then if I'm going to start again I won't start 'till nine at night and work till eleven or twelve.

Q: Do you find yourself waking up early in order to get your work done?

Carol: I did in the summer, I woke up early say 6:30 and they used to sleep in till 8:30 or 9:00 so I used to work for a couple of hours in the morning.

Q: What do you find most distracting about working in the home?

Laura: The kids, I think. Some days I just can't satisfy them and it all seems to be the same day that you've got so much to do that you've got to get out right away.

Q: How do you deal with that?

Laura: I don't know. There are days when you throw in a movie and hope for the back seat.

Fifteen homeworkers with children were asked how realistic homework was as a child care strategy.[5] Their responses can be grouped into three main themes: one, homework is not an ideal solution for child care; two, the age of children is a necessary consideration in advocating homework as a successful child care strategy; and three, homework is a realistic solution to child care. Three of the fifteen homeworkers indicated that homework is not a satisfactory strategy for combining home and work because in their view, it was difficult to juggle paid work and children simultaneously. As these homeworkers stated:

Mary: I had all these ideas that it would be like the perfect thing, you know, and it's not, you need somebody to look after the children whether

it's your husband, or a sitter or whatever at least one day a week to get a lot of the work done. I'd say it's a good solution for people who don't want to commute very far and it saves gas and you can be on the internet and well connected. As for child care, it's a bit deceiving. Like you might think, "Hey this is excellent." But it works out though that your work doesn't get done as fast...There would be the odd day that I would stay at home from work before I gave birth to Eric [son], I got so much work done. And I thought it would be like this after you have kids, but well I know there would be some interruptions but it has been more than I expected.

Rita: No I don't think it is possible to work and take care of your children. You're not doing anybody any favours. You're ignoring a child that wants attention and needs attention. You're getting yourself frustrated to death because you'd be trying to do two different things and you have a job that's not getting attention.

Sue: No it is not realistic working in your home and taking care of your children. A friend of mine does work at home and he wouldn't send his daughter to day care. He uses his computer for work and his daughter spends an awful lot of time in front of the TV doing colouring, solitary, you know...I know when I've had to do work in the morning I usually get up early and I'll try to get the work done before Jamie [son] gets up because I just know, he's a totally different child if he doesn't get that time in the morning. But watching children is work - absolute work. If you're looking over your shoulder you're not spending time with your kids. Spending time means going to the park, taking them up to their best friend's house...Taking care of your children is not parking them in front of the TV, it's work and if you're not involved with your children you're basically just a floor lamp that's there for safety. A lot of people are going into this thinking, "Well it's a way for me to be with my children." But they're not home with them, they're not working or their children aren't being cared for, or neither of them are getting the attention they deserve. I couldn't work the schedule I work if Jamie were four months old. He wouldn't be getting the attention he deserves, the work wouldn't be getting it, you know. Basically, having children at home and working at home - bad combination.

Four women indicated the age of children needs to be considered when assessing homework as a child care strategy. As these women stated:

Lynn: With the ages mine were when I started I think if you are somebody that's got you know, a two year old and a six month old and you're trying to do the same thing, you could do it, but I think you'd have to consider having somebody come in for certain hours to look after the kids. Just to keep the sanity and to make those important phone calls.

Carol: It depends on their ages. Once she [daughter] is at home if I get phone calls from clients or whatever I can usually handle those, but that's about it or if I had to sit down for half an hour at the computer. Actually before she used to nap and then she wouldn't nap, so she would come downstairs when I was working and she'll still play by herself and I would do work so it was do able, but you can't concentrate as well because you've always got your mind or you eye on her and then your other eye on the computer. So now I try to do everything when she's not here, so on the days when she's here I don't work. It's hard, like with the older boys, they're older so it's easier, but I mean they still interrupt you... My daughter still went to day care for two days in the summer, so I tried to work for those two days, so I still had three boys at home. I mean they are older that they can sort of you know take care of themselves, but not completely. But it was still noisy, it's always hard to concentrate.

Linda: I try to do my work when my husband goes out with the kids or I say, "Like, you've got to keep them away from me for half an hour while I make my calls." So I have to get the ideal home environment of no kids at home, husband out with them for a set amount of time, then I can focus on the calls and then I don't have to think about them. My husband will say, "Okay, I'll take them out for an hour. Does that give you enough time?" Beautiful, house is quiet, they're out doing I don't know what but they're out and I am then in my office and I can focus and it's quiet...People with older kids maybe they could do that and say, "Look you guys be quiet now for half an hour I'm going to do these calls." And the kids will be quiet, the older children, but mine they're still too young.

This statement was made by a homemaker who is dissatisfied overall with doing homework. Although there seem to be many aspects of homework which contribute to her dissatisfaction, what became evident was how tending to her children and trying to do paid work was the major difficulty for this homemaker. For this homemaker, her children were a main distraction to her paid work.

Interestingly, the eight women who claimed homework allows women to simultaneously look after their younger children, gave other responses which seemed to contradict this claim. First of all, the majority of these homeworkers face difficulties with homework due to the presence of children, for example child interruptions and interaction of their roles leading to conflict. Nevertheless, these homeworkers continue to regard homework as an adequate solution to child care needs. Evidently, these personal difficulties do not weigh heavily in these women's assessment of homework as an adequate strategy for child care. Interestingly, certain of these homeworkers went on to indicate the costs and difficulties involved in combining paid work and child care. As this one homemaker noted:

Jennifer: Well you can combine but the costs are high, and the costs are to women, they're not to the family because I find women will sacrifice everything to meet their families' needs and their needs just go by the wayside and needs for everything else. Like the needs to be creative, the need for intellectual stimulation, the need for time for themselves, I mean that's just all history.

Another homemaker similarly noted how it is realistic to combine child care and paid work, but in order to do so women need to have certain characteristics, otherwise the pressures of combining will be overwhelming. As this homemaker stated:

Rosa: It's feasible. But you have to be pretty good with time management, problem solving that kind of thing. And you can't be somebody who worries and fusses about all the littlest things. You know, if you're concerned about dog hair in your rug all the time, or something like that, forget it you're going to be a basketcase - men in white jackets come for you.

Ironically, four of the eight homeworkers claiming that children and paid work can be successfully combined all used a form of child care and/or reported that they ignore their children while doing work. These strategies are discussed in the following responses:

Carla: I had a nanny for a while as well which made it very easy for me. So when I was working up in my office she was looking after the kids.

Elysa: So I use to end up and what I finally did to make it work was I hired a teenager to take them out for a walk even after school or to the park where I would then have that hour to make phone calls.

Laura: My mom and dad come over once or twice a week and take the kids so it gives me a couple of hours to give them all the work.

Further, when their children were home, they needed either to keep them occupied in order to do their paid work or wait to do the work when the children were asleep. These homeworkers typify the strategy used in order to do paid work and simultaneously tend to younger children:

Elysa: So I'd often sit them in front of the TV and say, "Okay, if you don't bug me or make no noise for half an hour [laughs], while I make these phone calls then..." again, I'd offer them some reward, "We'll go for a walk, I'll read you a story."

Carla: Fortunately, they both slept for three hours every afternoon so I would get a huge chunk of work done then. But trying to just to work around their schedule was very difficult...And I would put a movie in for them and hopefully they would sit and watch and they're fairly good.

Therefore, combining roles for these homeworkers may seem realistic, but at the same time they have help through the use of some form of child care and/or limiting the extent to which they are "really" combining. For instance, they do paid work demands when children are taking naps or are occupied. Therefore, these eight women seem to be overlooking the manner in which they are able to manage homework with child care

successfully. These contradictions in women's assessment of homework as a child care strategy was also supported by the findings in the home-based work literature (Christensen 1989; Costello 1989; 1988). This homeworker with three children aged nine, six, and three was unable to combine paid work and child care successfully, and questions those homeworkers who argue it is realistic to combine. She stated:

Linda: Some people can do it [combine children with paid work], great, but I wonder. There's this woman I know who is doing a wonderful job of it. I think anyways from the outside view. But my husband keeps saying, "But what about her kids, don't you think her family life is suffering?" Cause she will just say, "Here watch a video for two hours, or go outside," pushes them outside and does her calls. And it's like you see these kids, and it's like wait a minute something's got to give.

What becomes evident from this specific quote and the findings discussed above is that in order to combine paid work and child care successfully, either the latter or former must suffer because it is unrealistic for homeworkers to believe they can meet both home and work demands simultaneously. This causes women trying to successfully meet both demands to become inundated with responsibilities and consequently, either their home life or paid work suffers. That is, if they are with their children they are not concentrating on their paid work demands, on the other hand, if they are doing paid work they are not with their children.

The hypothesis that the representation of homework as an "ideal" child care strategy does not accurately reflect the realities of doing homework is strongly supported by the findings. This finding adds to those in the literature discussed in Chapter Two, which also contradicts this image of homework. This was confirmed by those women who stated upfront that homework is not a realistic solution and those women who indicated

that ages of children is a significant consideration in assessing this representation. Further, those women claiming homework is a satisfactory strategy for doing paid work and tending to younger children, gave other responses that contradict this image. Therefore, homework as a viable child care strategy is not an accurate portrayal of this paid work strategy. From these findings it becomes evident that the age of children is a significant consideration in assessing whether homework is likely to be a satisfactory child care strategy. The discussion above illustrates how for younger children homework is not a solution for doing paid work and tending to younger children. However, for women with school-age children and older children, combining homework and child care may be more realistic because the constant demands are minimized. Interestingly, this homemaker who feels that homework is a successful child care strategy points to how the age of children does make a difference in assessing the overall extent to which homework is a viable child care strategy:

Q: While you're sitting there working at the computer, do they allow you to work, or are you faced with constant interruptions?

Carla: Yes, they would. It's taken training and as they get older they understand more. When they're two or three they don't understand that, you know, you can't talk to them and play with them while you're working. So as they get older they just understand better.

For those women with young school-age children and older children, the representation of homework as a ideal child care strategy is little more realistic, although as indicated the difficulties may lessen but not disappear.

This representation of homework as a child care solution is a means through which gender relations are played out in keeping women tied to the home and in "their

appropriate place". For instance, by representing homework as a means to do paid work and in the process be with their children, this strategy appears to be an ideal strategy to help deal with the demands women are faced with in society. However, as argued previously, this strategy does not eliminate the juggling act or the dilemma of multiple roles for women with family demands. Further, by viewing homework as a child care strategy, it could also be a way that women rationalize their decision to do homework. By using homework as a strategy for meeting both paid work demands and child care demands men are receiving the best of both worlds. That is, they are freed from the majority of child care responsibilities (this was confirmed in Section 5.6 dealing with gender relations in the home); they continue to receive child care at no expense; and further capitalists are freed from their responsibilities to provide child care. These benefits were acknowledged by various homeworkers when discussing the support they receive from their husbands. When asked whether their husband supports their work, the majority of women indicated, "Yes," but in explaining why they do, it became evident that they do so because it advances their own interests. As this woman indicated:

Rita: He does, he's actually very good. He can count on me if he needs me to pick up the girls if he can't. I'm there to work with him too, you know, I do drop off and pick up at times. Whereas if I did not have this home office it would be all on his shoulders, it would be all his responsibility as would dinner every night.

Homework is also advocated through some literature, public discourse, the media, and employers as offering flexibility with respect to combining home and work and personal autonomy on the job. Do the results of this study, support or contradict this image? This is discussed below.

5.10.2 Confronting the Representations of Home-Based Work: The Flexibility and Autonomy of doing Homework:

Home-based work is hailed by employers and the media as increasing flexibility in combining home and work, and providing personal autonomy on the job. The issue of flexibility in doing home-based work was discussed with all the homeworkers. Of the 20 homeworkers, fifteen felt home-based work offered them flexibility, two indicated the flexibility was limited, and three felt homework did not offer flexibility (Table 5.9). Evidently, for homeworkers who stated their satisfaction with the flexibility provided by homework, it seems that the representation of homework as offering women flexibility is realistic. However, what became evident from the interviews was that although flexibility of doing homework is a realistic representation of homework for some women, it does not accurately depict the flexibility involved in doing homework for all women. That is, for some women the claim that homework offers flexibility in combining home and work lives is misleading.

What is of concern with these assessments of the flexibility offered by homework is the conditions that eleven homeworkers claiming to have flexibility in doing homework face. For instance, the flexibility provided by homework is at a cost; that is, women find that their demands of home and work lives are intensified, they sacrifice their paid work demands and personal needs, and they do paid work past normal working hours. For these homeworkers, the flexibility of homework is limited because it forces the homeworker to extend her workday in order to meet the demands of both home and work lives and/or to

Table 5.9: Flexibility in Doing Homework

Participant	Flexibility - Yes	Flexibility - Limited	Flexibility - No
1	*		
2		*	
3	*		
4			*
5			*
6	*		
7	*		
8	*		
9	*		
10			*
11	*		
12	*		
13	*		
14		*	
15	*		
16	*		
17	*		
18	*		
19	*		
20	*		

meet the demands of paid work responsibilities. Eleven of the fifteen homeworkers (nine with children, two without) experiencing flexibility in combining home and work lives all face an extended workday because their work is structured around family and/or due to paid work demands. These homeworkers illustrate the costs of the flexibility provided by homework with respect to allowing women to combine home and work lives:

Laura: Yes, I'm satisfied with the amount of flexibility. She [person doing work for] doesn't care whether I get up at three in the morning and work until whatever as long as I send her stuff out. Once in while my husband gets up at 4:30 so once in a while I get up with him. He wakes me up and he leaves at 6:30. So when I wake up with him I email all my messages. It's amazing the amount of work you can get done even getting up at six until seven. Getting the work done before I get my eldest daughter up for school, you can get twice as much stuff done.

Irene: Normally we put the signs out today that we're open somewhere around 9:00 in the morning and we still quite often have people wandering here at 10:00 at night...So I say on average about twelve to fourteen hours a day that we're working and of course I also have another full-time job which is called housewife [laugh]. So on top of that I cook, and I bake, and I wash, and I clean, and I sew, and all these things, it's all part and partial of work.

Carla: I would stop work at 4:30 when my husband gets home to get dinner ready.

Q: And then what would you do in the evenings?

Carla: It depends. I will do work in the evenings but I try not to because I want to spend time with my family plus I walk, I do a lot of walking as well so I make time for that.

Q: So, once the children are in bed, do you find yourself working at times?

Carla: Yes.

Q: What time would your workday end?

Carla: Well at various times depending how busy I am, sometimes twelve or one in the morning.

Although the presence of children is not a factor in extending two of the homeworkers' workdays, a significant factor is at work, namely, the pressure of paid work

responsibilities. For instance, one homemaker being paid by piece rate finds that her workday is extended in order to meet her quota and to go beyond in order to make more money. As she points out:

Anne: I work more on Saturdays now than I have ever have in 20 years of working for the company.

Further, the other homemaker's response illustrates how her workday is lengthened as a result of the pressure of owning her own business:

Irene: It is a lot harder work because you do put in a lot of longer hours. As I say you've always got the pressure there seven days a week. It's not a walk out at 5:00 and forget it 'till Monday morning, you just don't have that. And in order to be successful I think you have to work twice as hard if you are working at home, by much more, it's not easy. A perfect example, the other night somebody wanted a framing job done and they work in a store so they're working until 9:00 at night. So they ended up coming here after 9:00 at night to order a picture frame and we were still selling them the picture frame at 11:00, showing them what combination of frame they could have and mat, and I don't know too many people in an office that would work until 11:00 at night.

This response also raises the interesting issue of the differences between working at home versus working outside the home. For these eleven women the flexibility of homework allows them to over-extend their hours for paid work and to meet family demands so that the homeworkers find themselves working around the clock or more than if they worked in the office. As Pennington and Westover (1989) claim, the flexibility inherent in homework is that it allows women to overwork past what is considered reasonable and healthy. These findings are supported by the home-based work literature (Costello 1989; Pennington and Westover 1989) which shows that homework is flexible but at the same time it creates the problem of extending work for many women over the whole day.

Only four of the fifteen women experience a more accurate representation of the image portrayed of homework as offering the advantage of being flexible. For instance, a homemaker with younger children in day care full-time experiences flexibility. In her case it does not cause this woman's workday to be extended on a daily basis. This is similar to the other three homeworkers; two without children and one with older children. For these four homeworkers, homework may appear more flexible or they may have "true" flexibility in that they are not required to work around the clock. Rather, the flexibility they report is that homework permits them to take a day off or a few hours off without extending paid work time. As these homeworkers stated:

Terry: The flexibility and the hours is the number one thing that I can pick my own hours. One day this week, Tuesday I got up and I was tired, I didn't sleep well on Monday night, I had a headache and I thought, "You know what, I'm not going to do this work, I'm going to go back to bed." And I turned the answering machine off and I went back to bed until 1:00 in the afternoon. That will be something I've done twice this year.

Rita: The flexibility within this job that I have, I haven't said this yet also allows me to be able to take a day off if I needed to do something like to the African Lion Safari. In most jobs you can't do that and that's more a job function, or a benefit of this particular job because I can work at it and just as long as I get the job done.

The image of homework providing autonomy in setting their own days of work or work schedule is also misleading with respect to the findings of this study. As illustrated above, nine homeworkers with children set their hours around their children's schedule; therefore, the ability to pick their own hours and do paid work when they want is constrained. Therefore, for certain women the autonomy in doing homework is limited because for the majority of women their roles are not solely that of waged worker. In

doing homework women are waged workers, mothers and/or wives on a daily and continuous basis which inevitably causes their autonomy from waged homework to be limited. Homeworkers are rarely just waged workers, because there is no spatial separation from their other roles. This point is confirmed by this homemaker who claims women have less independence when doing homework and when asked why stated:

Rosa: Just because you're surrounded by your family, like you're not yourself. When you go to work you sit at your desk, you're you. Because when you go into your office you're you in the office, you're not anybody's mom, you're not anybody's wife, you're in the office. So that's one fact as far as I'm concerned.

Further, this homemaker feels her ability to set her own hours are constrained because of her children and the need to get paid work done. As this homemaker states:

Nicole: Well I think the flexibility is yes and no. It gives me the ability to schedule around the kids, it gives me that flexibility, but because our company is still in its infancy, I have to get the booking done and answer the phones.

Further, five of the 20 homeworkers, all with children, who stated that their work is not flexible or is limited in its flexibility, also do not have the autonomy to choose their own hours. For instance, four of the women, (the two day care providers, the monitor for a telephone line, and the child birth educator) have set hours when they work. Similarly, the two day care providers do not have control over their work schedule; that is, their work schedule is totally controlled by the schedule of the parents in need of their services. The working class administrator for a company also has limited control over her work schedule, for instance her scheduling of work is based on the needs of the company and when they need/want the work. Further, the telephone line operator has specific days set

by her employer. This is similar to the home-based employee for an insurance office processing claims whose scheduling of work is determined on the daily schedule of the delivery truck (its time of arrival is not always consistent). Therefore, for the majority of homeworkers, their autonomy in setting their own hours is constrained in terms of family demands and paid work demands.

The limited autonomy experienced by homeworkers is consistent with the findings in the literature on home-based work. Costello (1988) and Beach (1989) for example discussed the limited autonomy experienced by homeworkers with children as a result of their work being structured around the needs of their family. This limited autonomy is largely experienced by working class homeworkers whose working day and hours are tightly structured around capitalist's demands. However, there are certain working class homeworkers who are fortunate to enjoy a less constrained schedule. Therefore, these women make up the privileged members of the working class who have greater work autonomy than others in the same class. This is illustrated in the two quotes given by working class homeworkers:

Elysa: I kind of have always worked a four day week. I always kind of slough off on Fridays. The hours are whatever I want them to be. I tend not to be a morning person, so I don't schedule anything for the morning.

Rhonda: I start work every morning at 7:00 and I finish up at 5:30. I do this everyday, five days a week.

For those homeworkers who make up the petite bourgeoisie and the modern petite bourgeoisie, they generally have greater ability over their work schedule. Although as discussed above, certain homeworkers are constrained by family demands, the petite

bourgeoisie continue to have the ability to control their own schedule compared to the working class whose schedule is controlled by the demands of capitalists.

The hypothesis that the flexibility and autonomy perceived by doing homework is not realistic for all women is strongly supported by the findings. Both images of homework are misleading. The majority of women in this study do not experience flexibility without also facing other problems, and further the majority of women in this study do not experience autonomy. Therefore, these representations of homework must be viewed with concern, because they offer a portrayal of homework which is not accurate for all women. Differences in women's situations and class positions need to be considered in assessing such representations and how they hold true for different women. These images were also assessed in the homework literature. The findings from the literature (Costello 1988; 1989; Christensen 1989; Salmi 1996) also illustrate the minimal degree to which these images hold true for women homeworkers.

5.11 Degrees of Vulnerability

As outlined in Chapter Four, I am conceptualizing that the outcome of this strategy is that the gendered relations of power in society and women's subordinate position within patriarchal, capitalist society are perpetuated. Further, class relations are reinforced and reproduced in the various degrees to which women face economic and social vulnerability in doing homework through their wages and benefits. Therefore, the degree of vulnerability women face in doing homework varies depending on their wages

and benefits.[6] Below I present an analysis of the wages and benefits of the homeworkers and how this relates to their economic and social vulnerability.

5.11.1 Wages and Benefits: The Vulnerability of Doing Home-Based Work:

The interview results indicate that the wages of the majority of homeworkers was a significant factor in perpetuating the economic vulnerability of women in patriarchal, capitalist societies. Table 5.10 summarizes the rate of pay received by each homemaker. The homeworkers who occupy a petite bourgeoisie set their own wages. This factor locates them within the petite bourgeoisie, in that they have control over their wages. However, their rate of pay keeps this class in an economically vulnerable situation because they are paid by profits earned from their own business; therefore, their income is susceptible to fluctuations in demand. Because the majority of these homeworkers work on demand, their workload is not consistent which ultimately causes fluctuations/inconsistency in their wages (not being able to produce the same amount on a daily or weekly basis). For example, this homemaker directly links the inconsistency of her work to the fluctuations in her wages and the pressure and difficulty which this creates:

Irene: We teach painting classes for five dollars an hour which is a lot lower than minimum wage, but you hope that you will get several students into the class which brings the wage up and say if you've got you know, four or five kids then you're getting maybe 20 dollars an hour, maybe 25 dollars an hour which is great. But during the summer of course you might have them on holidays so you might be down to one kid so you're earning five dollars an hour and parents love it because it's cheaper than babysitting, but if I charge more they won't come. So you got to have a lot more leeway being self-employed. You've got to be willing to take a

Table 5.10: Homeworkers' Type of Earning

Participant	Hourly Wage	Contract Work	Commission Sales	Self (based on profits earned)	Piece Rate	Salary
1		*				
2				*		
3				*		
4	*					
5	*					
6				*		
7			*			
8						*
9			*			
10	*					
11			*			
12						*
13	*					
14				*		
15					*	
16					*	
17				*		
18			*			
19				*		
20				*		

little bit less and all the little bit counts [laughs]. So if you're only getting one person in a class and only earning five dollars an hour then you try your hardest to sell a picture frame at the same time and that's the way it works.

Further, this homeworker is worth quoting at length since she points to the wider context within which issues of homeworkers' economic vulnerability and its manifestation in inconsistent wages need to be considered:

Nicole: When I worked outside the home I had my own money [laughs]. As much as Fred [husband] and I say, "It's our money" it was that I still contributed. I'd never not contributed to our household. Although I'm still contributing, it's still taken me a while to look at it as a different type of contribution now...It's a standing joke, I get what's left over. We're trying to build this company so everything goes back into the company...I'm not worried about getting paid at this point. I figure my rewards will come...Fred does the bookkeeping and the banking that's one of his jobs. That's my own hang up, I think, because all of a sudden I don't have financial contribution to the family, so then that's the one thing that gets me. You know, it's hard to explain.

This homeworker raises various issues that need further consideration. She illustrates how the sacrifice she made in leaving a well-paid nursing job of many years which gave her a consistent pay check has placed her in an economically vulnerable situation both within her household and in society at large. Further, the patriarchal relations of power within the home are reinforced and reproduced by keeping this woman's position within the household as a housewife tending to the children and "helping" in getting the business going. The relations of power within the household are further reproduced in this woman's situation by keeping the banking in the hands of her husband. Therefore, her position within these relations is one of subordinate status. This woman, in doing home-based work, was robbed of her financial security and her wage

earning position within the household. Further, this homeworker illustrates clearly, as surprisingly few homeworkers did, the potentially severe future consequences, of remaining dependent on one's partner. This homeworker is aware of the possible consequences; however, it did not influence her decision to work in the home. Economic dependence on husbands was further evident in other homeworkers' responses. For instance, six of the homeworkers asked contributed 25 per cent or less to the total household income. Only one homeworker contributed 50 per cent to the household income. These findings indicate that the economic situation of these homeworkers is alarming - such minimal contributions to the total household income may also translate into women's minimal decision-making in the household. This in turn may strengthen the subordinate role of women within the household and family unit. The fact of economic dependency was further confirmed by these homeworkers when asked how they deal with the inconsistency of their pay:

Carla: I also have my husband's pay check coming in weekly.

Lynn: My husband's income allows us to live a very comfortable life.

A homeworker conscious of the economic vulnerability associated with remaining dependent on her husband's income illustrates how she deals with the dependency:

Irene: I feel very insecure about my wages. I have to have a bank account in my name, although we use it as a household bank account. I feel I've got to have something in my name. I can't go to my husband and say, "Please can I have 20 dollars." I can't cope with that. I have to have something that is mine and I've always been a person that stashes money away for a rainy day I guess. So if I'm teaching an art class, if I might have three children and they give me fifteen dollars I have a little pot upstairs and the money goes into the pot. Having that small amount, fifteen dollars, makes me feel a bit more secure than having nothing in the pot...I think one

of the other problems is that this is a second marriage for me and my first marriage ended with my husband walking out and taking absolutely everything, I was stupid not to have a bank account. And he went and I was broke, simple as that. And I decided never again would that happen.

This homemaker who realizes her dependence on her husband and the possible future consequences of that is trying to resist these relations by not becoming totally financially dependent on her spouse (although fifteen dollars in a pot won't go far).

Referring back to the homeworkers' wages, the one homemaker whose class position is that of petite bourgeoisie without a husband continuously struggles to make ends meet since the household income is not supplemented by a partner. This divorced, self-employed homemaker illustrates the constant struggle of trying to make ends meet due to her unpredictable workload and consequently, inconsistent wages levels:

Jessica: It's very hard. I am very conservative about how I spend my money and there's nothing for extras. I just have to get by with what I have and try and do a little bit of planning ahead so that if I see there's a month where things are gonna be really thin, then easing up and making sure they even though it might look like there's a balance in the bank account, but it's not gonna be there a few months from now.

The majority of the working class homeworkers, who are made up by independent contractors, home-based employees, and those women who self-define themselves as self-employed (although do not correspond as such to the criteria used in this study, see Chapter Three) are remunerated by piece rates, hourly wages, commissions, or employed by contract. Those homeworkers remunerated by piece rates and commissions have to put up with greater inconsistency in wages because their wages are based on the amount of work they receive or on commission sales. For instance, Carla's wages are based on piece rates; that is, her pay is based on the number of pages transcribed and varies depending on

the amount of work given to her by doctors. Therefore, this homeworker is unable to produce the same amount on daily or weekly basis. However, the inconsistency in this woman's wages from home-based work is compensated for by consistent wages from her outside paid work. Further, Anne who is also paid by piece rate, experienced a change from a consistent salary when working outside the home to a wage based solely on productivity when she moved to the home (another form of place discrimination). Also this homeworker took a cut in pay in order to work at home and also began to work on a piece rate basis. This homeworker, who is satisfied with this rate of pay, indicated that she can actually make more money than she did working in the insurance office. However, she goes on to indicate that she must put in more hours to exceed the pay she received when she was in the office and also indicated that at times she is given a limited amount of work to do which limits the money she can earn. A homeworker paid by commission sales states her dissatisfaction with her inconsistent income:

Terry: I would say not having a steady income dissatisfies me. It would be nice to know. Like my husband says, "It would just be nice to know, if we could just know exactly what you were going to make at the end of this month we'd be able to plan better."

Further, this homeworker also illustrates the inconsistency of her wages:

Elysa: It's a commissioned business and you have good months. Summer's very slow and so you kind of have to plan for that. I feel my whole income is from September to June [laughs].

Those working class homeworkers who are paid by hourly wages and the one paid by contract are freed from the inconsistency of wages because they are paid the same amount for the same number of hours per week. However, dissatisfaction arose with their hourly

wage. For instance, three of the five homeworkers paid by hourly wages or contract are dissatisfied with their wage. As this day care worker stated:

Jennifer: And they also don't pay you minimum wage, I mean right there and then that's pretty significant because I think everyone should be paid minimum wage...So it works out to \$3 an hour which are wages that no parent would ever work for...

The two home-based employees who occupy positions in the the modern petite bourgeoisie are fortunate enough to continue to get as consistent salary as they did working outside the home and thus are relieved from the pressure and stress of inconsistent wages and inconsistent workload.

Employment benefits, such as pension, unemployment insurance, vacation and holiday pay, received by homeworkers also illustrate the social vulnerability faced by homeworkers. Referring to Table 5.11, of the 20 homeworkers only five receive employee benefits from their home-based work. As this homeworker who is paid by commission stated:

Linda: No, they [company] do nothing like that [have benefits for their employees]. They don't even ask for you social insurance number.

Further, of these five homeworkers, two homeworkers face limitations in terms of benefits received and one homeworker faced reductions to her employee benefits when she moved from the office to the home. For instance, the former two homeworkers do not receive vacation time, sick time, maternity leave, do not pay into Canada pension, and do not receive unemployment insurance because their pay is strictly commission. The latter homeworker who moved from the office to the home has faced changes in her benefits related to sick days. Another form of place discrimination. As this homeworker stated:

Table 5.11: Employment Benefits of the Women Homeworkers

Participant	Employment Benefit
1	no coverage
2	covered by husband
3	covered by husband
4	covered by husband
5	no coverage
6	no coverage
7	covered by husband
8	full coverage
9	limited coverage
10	no coverage
11	limited coverage
12	full coverage
13	covered by husband
14	no coverage
15	limited coverage
16	covered by husband
17	covered by husband
18	covered by husband
19	covered by husband
20	covered by husband

Anne: There are no casual sick days because you already are at home. There is short and long term disability but if I had a really bad cold and it took me five days to get over it, I would not get paid for the first two days. I also do not get paid for company holidays. I can do extra work but I have to do work in order to get paid.

Only two homeworkers (Katy and Rita) who occupy class positions within the modern petite bourgeoisie have as full benefit coverage as when they worked in the office. Therefore, the working class and the petite bourgeoisie both face social vulnerability due to the lack of benefits they receive from their paid work. This situation is of concern because it keeps women in a state of dependency on husbands for benefits. For instance, eleven of the eighteen homeworkers depend on their husband's coverage. What is significant here is that even though married homeworkers compensated for their lack of benefits by relying on their husband's benefits, those such as pensions could not be obtained from other family members. The lack of benefits received is even more significant for the two homeworkers without husbands and for two other homeworkers with husbands (one husband is also self-employed and the other also works on contract). These women are faced with situations in which they are left to basically look after themselves with respect to expenses, such as dental coverage, future savings plan, and medical expenses. Further, these women do not have the luxury of taking vacation time because they are not paid for the time taken off, or even more significant, if these women do not work because they are sick they do not get compensated for the time off. As these homeworkers stated:

Laura: No I don't get any benefits with the companies I work for. I do get time off, but I don't get paid if I take time off. Also, if I'm sick I don't get paid. That's about it, if I don't work - I don't get paid.

Rhonda: I have absolutely nothing. If I take a holiday off, I don't get paid for the time I take off. If I get sick, I don't get paid for sick, to be sick. So most of us work whether we're sick or not. And when I retire I won't be able to claim a blue bean because there is nothing.

The hypothesis that the degree to which homeworkers face both economic vulnerability and vulnerability to exploitation as a result of poor wages and benefits is strongly supported by the findings. These findings support the home-based work literature which illustrated women's dissatisfaction with their low wages and lack of benefits (Costello 1988; Gerson and Kraut 1988). For the majority of homeworkers, the condition under which they are doing homework is one where they are vulnerable to economic exploitation through their rate of pay and the absence of regular employment benefits. Only two homeworkers from this study face a less vulnerable economic position in that they have secure salaries and regular employment benefits. These findings illustrate inconsistency in degrees of vulnerability within classes themselves. For instance, the 7 homeworkers who are in the class position of petite bourgeoisie, the circumstances of their lives cause experiences of the same class position to vary. For example, the economic vulnerability of these women is influenced by presence or absence of an employed husband or partner, the degree to which they contribute to the finances of the household, and the degree to which they depend on their husbands for financial support. This causes their experiences of the same class position to vary. Further, those women who are part of the working class also experience different degrees of vulnerability in terms of employment benefits and wages. For instance, certain homeworkers have partial employment benefits from their paid work while other women in the same class position

do not have any. Further, although the working class' inconsistent rate of pay places them all in an economically vulnerable situation, there are those who are less vulnerable due to the higher wages that they receive from their paid work. For instance, the working class day care worker (Jennifer) quoted above earns less than minimum wage whereas this independent contractor is in a more privileged position within the working class which lessens her vulnerability relative to Jennifer's situation:

Elysa: As a director we make over \$50,000, and we still don't work more than 25-30 hours a week.

Consequently, being a member of the *petite bourgeoisie*, the modern *petite bourgeoisie*, or a privileged member of the working class will have an influence on the ability for such women to experience better homework conditions than others. The degree of vulnerability faced by homeworkers was documented by Christensen (1989) and Dangler (1994). They briefly discussed the different ways in which women in different homework positions faced different degrees of economic and social vulnerability.

The vulnerability experienced as a result of homeworkers' wages and lack of benefits evidently do not influence the majority of women's overall satisfaction with homework. One explanation for this is that for these women simply being able to contribute anything to the household income is sufficient to satisfy them and the amount of their contribution does not make a difference. This point supports the interesting finding that one of the advantages of homework claimed by certain homeworkers was that it allowed them to contribute to the household income when they would not have been able to do otherwise (Costello 1988). This homeworker confirms this point:

Linda: It's a fraction. I mean what it does say last year was nice at Christmas because it's just a busy time, it gave us some extra money for buying some presents. It gives me a good feeling inside to say, "I'm contributing, I've got this cheque, I've worked for it. Hey, I'm not just a mom doing all that stuff." That's important.

Although this may be a significant advantage for certain home-based workers, it does not negate the fact that homework keeps women in an economically vulnerable position within the household and society at large. For two of the dissatisfied day care homeworkers, inadequate wages seem to play a significant role in their negative evaluation of home-based work. As this one day care homemaker stated:

Rhonda: The money. I feel that for the work we do, we are not compensated...We lose in monetary ways to begin with. We lose even our self-esteem, sometimes you don't want to carry on with the day anymore, you just feel like throwing in the towel.

5.12 Summary: Advancing our Knowledge about the Experience of Female Homeworkers

The findings discussed above illustrate that female homeworkers face complicated and diverse experiences in which they are faced with various challenges and difficulties in doing paid work from home. From the findings above, it is evident that certain processes shape the experience of homeworkers. For instance, both gender relations within the household and society and class relations which give rise to a set of class positions were at work in explaining these experiences. Through the analysis of various issues, the findings have allowed us to see the extent to which homework is a work strategy that allows women to resist patriarchal, capitalist relations or whether it allows women a way to respond to the powered relations between women and men in society. Further, new

insights were gained from this study in the analysis of class positions and the difference this makes to women's experience of homework. Related to this aspect, the findings illustrated how differences in women's situations are significant in understanding the various experiences homeworkers face. The findings illustrated how the aspects of space and place are significant in the understanding of the transformation of the home and work space.

The findings discussed above indicate that women's overall assessment of homework is not affected by various (negative) factors affecting their homework situation. For instance, the majority of homeworkers hold a positive evaluation of homework, regardless of the fact that by doing homework the majority of homeworkers become geographically isolated within the home or that homeworkers' status as waged worker is devalued. The findings illustrated how processes arising from gendered relations of power within the home and society which uphold the devalued status of women's work in the home, and keep women tied to the home and in "their place" are at work in shaping their experience. This study also illustrated how women's decision to do homework is constrained by the gendered relations of power played out in various forms for all women. Therefore, this study begins to shed light on how homework is not paid work chosen freely, but rather is a choice made by women due to the many constraints imposed on them within patriarchal, capitalist society. This study illustrated how sacrifices to women's career and potential future consequences are part of women's experience with homework. Surprisingly, the findings refuted the hypothesis that homeworkers' reasons for doing paid work were influenced by familial expectations.

Discussing homeworkers' strategies used against social/spatial isolation and devaluation in trying to resist gendered relations of power have opened new areas of study for homework. The findings concluded that the resistance against gendered relations vary for women and the results are one that women are not able to successfully contest gendered relations of power. Further, the findings related to the issue of gendered relations of power within the home illustrated how women are not able to successfully resist or contest the structured relations of labour or power within the household. This finding refuted the proposed hypothesis. In doing so, the findings illustrated that in doing homework women are reinforcing their primary domestic role by shouldering the majority of unpaid work and something which plays a significant role in shaping the conditions of paid work within the home. The insight of place discrimination in doing homework through increased domestic responsibilities versus working outside is raised in the findings and presents a new direction of analysis.

The findings illustrated the processes at work in limiting the extent to which homeworkers spatially reorganize the home space in order to accommodate paid work activities and home life. It was concluded that the socially constructed patriarchal ideology that the home is a place of family life limits women's ability to construct an adequate work space in the home. This study illustrated the different degrees in which women are able to reconstruct the home to accommodate paid work. Home-based work does not eliminate the juggling act most women experience in doing paid work, rather it intensifies the juggling as women are faced with both roles on a daily and continuous basis. A new area of analysis allowed us to see how the conditions homeworkers face in

managing home and work lives varies. Conditions, such as conflicts between women's roles manifested in domestic spaces that combine paid and unpaid labour, varies due to factors such as age of children, presence of children, and the use of child care strategies which sometimes allow homework to be viewed as a more realistic home/work accomodation for women.

This study opens a new area of analysis by looking at the meaning of the home. The findings refuted the hypothesis that women would experience a changed meaning of the home. Rather, the findings illustrated that the home as a place of family life is so strong that it becomes manifested in the meaning homeworkers continue to assign to home. Therefore, changing home space does not influence the meaning of place (the home as a place of family life). The findings concluded how the representations of homework are mere generalizations of the advantages homework may offer to certain homeworkers. In looking at the experiences of women homeworkers, such images are misleading for many women. Lastly, this study illustrated how homeworkers' economic vulnerability and exploitation in doing homework (based on both their wages and employment benefits) shapes the experience of homework for women. This area opened a new insight into the difference class makes in assessing the degree of economic vulnerability in doing homework.

Chapter Five endnotes

[1]As mentioned previously, at times the responses of the women will be contextualized; however, where they are not, the Tables produced in Chapter Three (Tables 3.2, 3.3) illustrate the situated context of the women and should be referred to in order to place the experiences of the women into context.

[2]As mentioned previously, for the purpose of this chapter, younger children are those five years or less, young (school aged) children are those six years to fifteen years, and older children are those sixteen and above.

[3]I want to make clear that in stating family values as a reason for women to remain at home I am not implying that the strength of “family values” is necessarily measured by the degree to which women conform to traditional roles. This claim I suggest is a very judgmental one used often in ways oppressive to women.

[4]For the purpose of this study interaction between home and work roles relates to how homeworkers combine home and work lives in the home sphere. Further, conflict between roles is used to describe the difficulties faced by the interaction of paid and unpaid roles, including stress, pressure, and tension produced as a result of the interaction.

[5]Many homeworkers with young and/or older children when assessing homework as a child care strategy reflect back to when their children were younger.

[6]I realize that wages and benefits are only partial measures of economic situation; however, these two indicators are significant with respect to the vulnerability homeworkers face in doing homework.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

In conclusion, I want to first address the issue of whether homework is a progressive or regressive strategy for women to undertake based on the overall results of the research findings. Next, I outline the significance of this study and its implications for future feminist and geographical research on women homeworkers.

6.2 Homework: A Regressive or Progressive Paid Work Strategy for Women?

The research results illustrate the varying conditions homeworkers face when doing home-based work. For certain homeworkers, homework is a paid work strategy which is relatively successful in that it allows them to work at home with limited conflicts between women's home and work roles as manifested in domestic spaces. These homeworkers either do not have children or have sufficient time during the day in which to do paid work because their children are in school or in day care. Also, certain women were able to resist prevailing gendered relations of power as played out in such ways as maintaining women's primary responsibility for domestic duties by struggling to reduce their household chores. However, although these women may be able to combine home and work lives with more ease and engage in (limited) resistance against gender relations, it does not necessarily alter the consequences of women's reintroduction of paid work space into the home. Homework is a strategy that allows certain women to deal with

their conditions of life. For instance, homework may allow women to cope with restructuring of jobs or lack of adequate and affordable day care. However, in assessing how this paid work accomodation affects women on an individual level and social level, the research findings indicated that homework is a regressive, disempowering work strategy for women. This assessment is directly related to specific research findings.

For instance, through the analysis of social/spatial isolation, the evidence presented suggests that homework ties women to the private sphere and by doing so maintains the long-standing ideology of women's place in the home sphere and consequently, the traditional view of this sphere as inferior. What was also articulated through the discussion of social/spatial isolation was the interrelation between doing homework and isolation which reinforces the ideological pressure for women to stay in "their place". For instance, by homeworkers being socially/spatially tied to the private realm the conditions homeworkers' experience is one which is consistent with this ideological construction of women's appropriate domestic sphere.

Consequently, study results concerning the devaluation of homework(ers) suggests that the conditions women experience in doing homework are not empowering as the paid work they are doing in the home is not recognized as being economically, productive work. Rather than being a work arrangement which helps women contest and resist forms of patriarchal, capitalist oppression they experience in their everyday lives, home-based work reinforces the invisibility of women's paid work and in the process sustains prevailing relations of power by: one, attributing homework the same devalued status as that of domestic work; two, maintaining the dominant ideological view that work in the

home is not “real” work thus reinforcing the marginal economic role of women within the family; and three, strengthening the ideology that a woman’s proper domain is the home where they can perform their natural (socialized) roles as mother and wife.

From the discussion of gendered divisions of labour in the homeworkers’ household, homework can be viewed as a regressive work strategy for women. In doing homework, women continue to find themselves inundated with the majority of domestic responsibilities and for some their unpaid work has actually increased. What is discouraging about the persistence of the gender division of labour within the home documented in this study is its long-term implications for women and their children, such as women being role models for children.

The homework strategy is a means for women to respond to gendered relations of power in the home and society. It is not a strategy which successfully contests and resists patriarchal relations. For certain women, they are able to resist patriarchal conditions more relative to other homeworkers thereby making homework less disempowering for these women. However, the resistance is only minimal in that gender relations continue to influence women’s experience of homework. Until major forms of resistance against patriarchal relations of power are evident, such as being able to successfully transform the gender division of labour in order to help homeworkers do paid work, the degree in which this strategy is an empowering work option remains limited.

6.3 Significance of Study and Its Implications for Future Research

From this study, we learn how geographical aspects of homework are important in

understanding the experiences of female homeworkers. For instance, this study allows us to see the geography of the home as a work environment, it considers the meaning of the home as a domestic space and how this influences people's view of paid work in the home and it examines strategies (both spatially and otherwise, such as the use of child care or through minimizing interruptions to their workday) that women use to try to balance home and work roles in the private space of the home. The geographical insights of this study provides a starting point for conducting future research on the importance in understanding the transformation of space and place through homework.

From the evaluation of homework based on the 20 women in this study, we begin to see how homeworkers face difficult working conditions in one way or another. However, this did not alter the majority of women's overall satisfaction with doing homework. Future research needs to further examine the disadvantages women face in doing homework and possible reasons why such disadvantages do not weigh into their general satisfaction with homework. Therefore, it is necessary to understand what factors, such as the ability to be at home with children, weigh heavily into women's assessment of homework and why. This will allow us to see the factors which influence their assessment and to better understand why they are satisfied or dissatisfied with homework. This study offers insights about how specific processes, such as gendered relations of power are at work in constraining women's decision to work at home. From examining the reasons homeworkers give for doing homework, two important issues arise which need to be further addressed by future researchers. These issues include: one, day care and women's thoughts about placing children into day care and how their views concerning day care

influences their decision to work at home; and two, the self-imposed expectations placed on women of what it means to be a good mother versus “other” people’s expectations and how this plays a role in their decision to do homework. Lastly, the discussion of the path to doing homework raises the new issue of the sacrifices women make to their career and future. This issue allows us to see how gender and class relations of power in society are at work in making women place their family before their career regardless of the potential consequences they may suffer. Other aspects of this issue that might be studied are: one, trying to understand women’s awareness of such consequences and whether they are/were a consideration in doing homework; and two, the value women place on such sacrifices.

The devaluation of women homeworkers and their work points specifically to the geographical issue of how the meaning of the home as a domestic space or non-work realm shapes people’s view of paid work in the home. This study shows the specific forms of devaluation homeworkers face. And it begins to point to the various ways in which such devaluation takes place. Further research needs to contribute to these forms of devaluation. For instance, devaluation faced by homeworkers by exploitation through unpaid labour was discussed in this study; however, the results were suggestive in that only a minimal number of women were asked about this. A consideration when addressing this form of devaluation is the difference a privileged group of homeworkers will have in experiencing devaluation through unpaid labour. For instance, a group of homeworkers which consisted of an especially privileged class position may have an unusually high degree of control over the labour process and could ensure they were reimbursed for all labour time and be able to secure fairer and higher wages. Therefore,

future studies must pay greater attention to class privilege as a significant difference in the degree of exploitation that women working at home experience.

This study considers the role of the gendered division of labour in shaping conditions of paid work within the home. A surprising finding was that the majority of women were unable to renegotiate domestic work. Perhaps this sample of women was in some ways atypical of women trying to reduce their share of unpaid labour. Possibly, this group of women homeworkers have internalized the idea that unpaid work is women's work. Therefore, future studies need to begin to understand specifically why such renegotiations are limited. For instance, are material resources limiting women in transforming the gendered division of labour or can it be that women and family members see unpaid work as women's/mothers'/wife's work. This study also offers insights about place discrimination faced by homeworkers. For instance, women homeworkers find they are doing more domestic work since being at home. More theoretical and empirical research is needed in this area based on other differences experienced by homeworkers versus working outside the home. The insights we have gained in discussing the work space in the home has allowed us to see the processes at work in making it difficult for women to appropriate space within the home. An issue which arose which needs further research analysis was that of how women themselves are not convinced that their work is "real" and thus hesitate to reorganize domestic space. Other aspects of this may be studied by looking at women's own assessment of their needs for a work space and how women themselves value the work they are doing in the home (both paid and unpaid).

In discussing the integration of home and work lives, this study begins to point to how women set aside paid work in order to minimize conflict between home and work. This was not common in the results; however, it does need future consideration because of the consequences of such a strategy used by women. These findings raise other questions which need to be investigated further. For instance, this study begins to question why women continue to be satisfied with homework although they face numerous difficulties. And further, questions posed in the research findings chapter (Chapter Five) need to be reflected upon again: Did women feel that the difficulties of homework were an inevitable part of their roles as other than a wife?; and Did women feel that consequences to their paid work, such as putting work aside and extending their workday, were issues as long as their families were content?

The puzzling findings that the meaning of the home did not change for women working at home shows how the social construction of the home as a place of family life influences its meaning for women, even when paid work has been introduced. This aspect of women's experience is not fully understood; however, this study provides a useful starting point for future research. Lastly, the issue of the degree of economic vulnerability homeworkers face points to a new direction of study; that is, illustrating how homeworkers vary in terms of economic and social vulnerability and how class positions also play a significant role in understanding this issue. For instance, understanding how class positions cause variation in women's degree of economic vulnerability in doing homework.

I want to point out the limitations of this study. First, this study has not addressed some important factors and processes at work in shaping the experiences of female homeworkers. For instance, differences, such as race was not looked at in understanding the experiences of women homeworkers. Therefore, future research should be aware of the need to consider “other” differences, such as race and disability in explaining the experiences of homeworkers. Next, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of homework by examining processes, such as gendered relations of power at work in shaping the experiences. For instance, this study examines class relations in terms of women’s individual class position based on their homework position and how this position influences the conditions of homework. Thus, this study accounts for women’s individual class position without taking into consideration how/whether a homeworker’s partner’s class position complicates/influences their position. Further, this study is limited in terms of understanding the lived experiences of female homeworkers without children because of the small sample of these women. Unfortunately, the difficulties encountered in finding women to participate in this study prevented me from including more homeworkers without children.

In doing this study, I hope to have played a small part in recognizing female homeworkers as a significant area of study. Further, by critically assessing the homework experience of 20 female homeworkers I hoped to have encouraged this specific group of women and others to critically reflect on their homework experiences and some of the processes at work in affecting their experiences. I hope this feminist study of female home-based workers has been successful in encouraging other scholars to commit

themselves to doing research of this group of waged workers. This study has confirmed results from past research studies of female homeworkers and more significantly it has raised various other issues of concern which I hope will be taken on by future scholars researching in this area so that we can begin to understand more fully the lives and experiences of female homeworkers.

Appendix 1: Explanatory Letter

Hello, my name is Janice Zanon, a Masters student of Geography at McMaster University. I am conducting research on home-based work, I understand you are a home-based worker. Your assistance in this study will be of great help to the study I am conducting of white, heterosexual, female home-based workers. It would be greatly appreciated if you can take some time to read this letter.

I would like to tell you a bit about my research interests. I am interested in understanding more about your experience of home-based work. Some of the issues include are you satisfied?; why did you choose to work in your home?; how have the distribution of housework and child care changed?; have your expectations been met?; what challenges or obstacles do you face by working at home?; and how do others perceive the work you do in the home? I would like to conduct an interview with you and with about 20 other female homeworkers to help me begin to understand these issues.

Before you make decision, let me tell you something about the interview process. The interviews will be very informal. They will be directed as much by you as by me. I have a set of issues that I wish to address. However, I am interested in understanding your experiences and your thoughts, so you are encouraged to introduce issues that seem important to you at any time. You are also free to end a line of discussion as you see fit. I do not want to make you feel uncomfortable, or say things you don't want to say. You will be entitled to end the interview at any time, or ask questions at any time. At the end of the conversation I will ask you if you would like anything we discussed to be left out of the transcript. The interviews will be tape-recorded only with your permission. All information you provide will be treated as confidential. In other words, your name will not be associated with any information you provide, or any thoughts you share with me. The tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study. Further, when the research is complete you will receive a summary of the findings or a copy of my thesis can be lent to interested participants.

If you agree to participate in an interview, I will bring a written statement that confirms what I have just said. You will be asked to sign a consent form, in which you agree to participate in an interview. Even after signing the form you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and retract the information you have provided. The interview will last approximately one hour and I may contact you once again following the completion of all interviews if certain issues/questions need clarification. I hope this gives you some idea of what I am asking of you. Do you have any questions? Are you willing to let me interview you? Please feel free to contact me at (phone number) with any questions. Furthermore, please call me to let me know whether or not you will participate in the study. At this time we can set a day and time to meet.

Thank You, Janice Zanon

Appendix 2: Key Informant Interview Checklist

1. Introduction: Background/logistical

- marital status -age -formal education
- household composition -age of children -employment history

2. Homework Features:

- homework position, e.g. self-employed, independent contractor, paid employee
- do you have any employees
- describe the work you do
- length of time working from home
- did you face any sort of problems in starting your own business

3. Reasons for Home-Based Work:

- what was the initial reason/factor for you to work from home
- was the decision to work at home solely made on your own
- was working from home a voluntary decision made on your part or were you expected to remain at home
- were you contemplating any other work options besides working from home

4. Geographic Changes: Paid Labour in the Home Versus Paid Labour in Workplace:

- changes in pay
- changes in employment benefits
- any other changes which have occurred

5. Gendered Division of Labour within the Home:

- have you taken on more/less/same household responsibilities from when you were working outside the home
- have your family's expectations changed since you began working from home
- if worked outside the home prior to doing homework - discuss history and present distribution of household work. For instance, compare and contrast amount of time spent on: child care, cleaning, shopping, cooking, other
- if did not work outside the home prior to doing homework - discuss distribution of household responsibilities.
- Speculate: if you worked outside the home, do you think you would be doing same amount of household work
- how does the amount of work and time you spend on household chores compare to that of other family members
- are you dis/satisfied with the division of labour in the home
- do you have hired help

6. Homework Reactions:

- are you dis/satisfied with working at home, why

- what do you find satisfying/dissatisfying
- what is the most challenging aspect of doing homework
- do you want to work outside the home again, if yes, why

7. Advantages/Disadvantages of Homework:

- what are the advantages of working at home
- what are the disadvantages of working at home

8. Work Schedule:

- how many hours a week do you work, how many days
- do you hold any other paid employment besides working in your home, if yes, why
- when do you do your work, why do you do it at this time
- can you describe a typical working day
- is your working day extended, e.g. do you find you are working past regular working hours
- how do you manage your time during the day

9. Earnings:

- how are you paid, e.g. piece/project rate, hourly or salary
- approximate your contribution to the household income
- do you have employment benefits
- contributions to household

10. Working Conditions:

- any major obstacles you encounter doing work from home
- is there any unpaid labour involved in your job
- do you have control over your work process, scheduling of work, rate of pay
- is your workload consistent
- do you feel homework has provided you with flexibility
- are you dis/satisfied with the amount of flexibility homework has given you

11. Interaction of Paid and Unpaid Work Roles:

general:

- how do you balance home and work lives
- is there anything that would help you balance home and work lives
- how successful are you in juggling home and work lives
- what features of the home environment do you find distracting

homework as a child care strategy:

- what are your thoughts on homework as a child care strategy
- how realistic is being able to do paid work and tend to family needs simultaneously
- do you use any child care strategy
- if child care was more adequate, less expensive would you consider going back to work

family/social relations:

- what would be different within the family if you worked outside
- does homework create any problems (e.g. tension) with you spouse or other family members (e.g. do they feel you are always doing work and have no time for them)
- does your family support your work

conflicts between home and work lives:

- has paid work invaded your home life or vice versa
- do you experience interruptions during your work, what sorts of interruptions do you experience, how do you deal with interruptions
- do your home and work roles interact with one another or are they separated
- do you experience work/family tensions/stress/conflict
- what would make working in your home easier

12. Homework Space

- where do you work in the home, describe your work space
- are you dis/satisfied with your work space
- why did you choose this particular space in the home
- do other activities occur in your work space, if yes, do they occur at the same time you are working.
- is any conflict produced as a result of the overlap

13. Spatial/Social Interaction:

- are you in contact with other coworkers, with your employer
- do you feel isolated within the home, can you describe this isolation
- how do you overcome this isolation
- compare isolation to when you worked outside the home

14. Meaning of the Home:

- what does the home mean to you now that you do paid work in it
- has the meaning of the home changed for you since you began working in the home

15. Perceptions of Homework:

- do you encounter misconceptions about what it means to be doing home-based work or to be a homeworker
- how do others (i.e. your friends, family) view working in the home

16. Comment on these images (found in the literature) of homeworkers and home-based work:

1. homework isn't a real job, it's just a hobby, a craft
2. you can successfully combine home and work lives
3. homeworkers have more control over their work and more autonomy
4. women choose to do homework

5. homeworkers don't deserve the same wages and working conditions as other workers

17. Conclusion:

- how would you describe your overall homework experience
- what advice would you offer other women contemplating working from home
- is there anything else you would like to mention that has not been discussed

Appendix 3: Letter of Consent

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview. Please read the following form carefully. It reviews a number of issues that have been previously discussed, and at this time I would like to mention again. These issues are important and need to be clearly understood prior to signing the form.

As mentioned previously, I am interested in understanding more about your experience of home-based work. Some of the issues include are you satisfied?; why did you choose to work in your home?; how have the distribution of housework and child care changes?; have your expectations been met?; what challenges or obstacles do you face by working at home?; and how do others perceive the work you do in the home?

This interview is to be conversational that is directed as much by you as by me. The interview will last approximately one hour. I may contact you again if certain issues/questions need clarification. If this follow-up is required, I do not anticipate it to be lengthy. It can be done over the phone.

For the interview I have a set of issues that I wish to address. But I am interested in understanding your experiences and thoughts about home-based work so you are encouraged to introduce other issues that seem important to you at any time throughout the interview. You are free to end a line of discussion as you see fit. I do not want to make you feel uncomfortable or say things you don't want to say. You are entitled to end the interview at any time or ask questions at any time. At the end of our conversation I will ask you if you would like anything we discussed to be left out of the transcript. A summary of my findings will be given to you at the end of the study. A copy of my thesis can be lent to interested participants.

The interview will be tape-recorded with your permission. All aspects of our conversation will be treated as confidential. Only myself and a tape transcriber will hear the tape. Neither your name nor any other identifying characteristics will be associated with what you say. The transcript which results from this research will include quotations of things you say and may include a general description of your situation, but will not include material that may identify you. At the completion of the study, the tapes will be destroyed.

If you have any concerns regarding this study please feel free to ask me now. Thank you for your time. Your signature below indicates that you have read this statement and understand it, and that you agree to participate in an interview. Your signature does not obligate you in any way. You are still free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Appendix 4: Interview Theme Code[1]

Background

- household composition -age of children
- age -education
- marital status -paid work history

Homework Features

- homework position -employees
- homework responsibilities -years working from home

Economic and Social Vulnerability of Doing Homework

- wages/income
- employment benefits
- changes from when working outside the home (i.e changes in pay and employment benefits)
- contributions to household income

Reactions to Homework

- disadvantages/dissatisfaction with homework -advantages/satisfaction with homework
- consideration of working outside the home -overall experience
- comparing homework with outside work -general remarks concerning homework
- differences in family, self if worked outside the home

Interaction of Home and Work Lives

- separation of roles -interaction of roles
- challenges of combining home and work lives -dealing with interruptions
- interruptions -distractions of home environment
- respect for women's work time

The Balancing Act: Juggling Home and Work Lives

- success in balancing home and work lives
- difficulties meeting home and work lives
- strategies of managing/coping with dual roles
- examples of homeworkers combining home and work

Family/Work Relations

- husband/wife relationship -paid work invading home life
- home invading paid work -family/work tension
- dealing with/minimizing tension

Homework as a Child Care Strategy

- use of child care strategy
- realistic assessment of homework as a child care strategy
- difficulties encountered with balancing children and paid work demands

The Working Woman

- dilemmas faced by working women
- values of working women
- sacrifices
- expectations placed on women
- support for women

The Gendered Division of Labour in the Home

- division of labour
- dis/satisfaction with division
- hired help
- amount of unpaid work versus working outside the home
- changes in household expectations
- unpaid responsibilities versus other family members
- reasons for doing more unpaid work

Reasons for Home-Based Work

- reasons-financial
- child care
- day care
- restructuring
- commuting
- stress at home and at work
- opportunity
- something to do
- lack of paid work opportunities
- voluntary choice
- consideration of other work options

Homeworkers' Work Schedule

- hours of work
- days of work
- extended workday
- working outside the home
- a "typical" working day

Social/Spatial Isolation

- social isolation
- spatial isolation
- dealing with isolation
- consequences of isolation
- comparing isolation in the home versus working outside

Working Conditions

- flexibility in doing homework
- satisfaction with flexibility
- autonomy in doing homework
- (in)consistency in workload

Perceptions of Homework(ers)

-misconceptions/views of homework(ers)

Homeworkers' Work Space

-location of work space -dis/satisfaction with work space

-importance of work space -spatial overlap

Meaning of the Home

-meaning of the home

-changes in meaning

Other

-other

Appendix 4 endnotes

[1] Bold print is the general theme and the fine print is the sub-theme related to a particular general theme.

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