As a response to economic crisis and industrial restructuring, in less industrialized countries women are engaging in home-based informal work, creatively adjusting schedules and using the home as a working space while carrying out reproductive activities in their everyday lives. However, being tied to the home may have consequences for the social ecology of family life, gender relations and women's condition. How do women manage to accommodate paid work in the microgeography of the home? Is working at home an effective strategy for integrating work and family or does it create problems and tensions? This paper documents and examines the time-space household arrangements that women home-based workers make in order to accommodate productive work into the home, emphasizing the consequences for gender roles and gendered spatial relations.

WOMEN'S HOME-BASED WORK IN TIJUANA

In an economic context highly determined by the border interaction with the United States, like other border cities in northern Mexico, Tijuana's labor market is characterized by high rates of female participation in the manufacturing sector due to the establishment and development of maquiladora enterprises. However, self-
employment in the commerce and service sectors has been a traditional source of employment for women in Tijuana. The percentages of female participation in these sectors (services, 62% and commerce, 21%) are higher than in manufacturing (14%) (Browning and Zenteno, 1993:18).

According to Zenteno (1993:92), despite the fact that Tijuana is characterized by the lowest percentage of the labor force in the informal sector, this is the only border city that shows higher probabilities of female activity in the informal sector. Oliveira (1990) showed that the national trend towards an expansion of female employment in the informal sector in modes of work such as home-based work was also present in Tijuana during the years of economic crisis.

Home-based work is usually considered as part of the so-called informal economy in Third World countries. Working at home is commonly referred to as industrial productive, wage work which takes place at the worker’s home (García Ramón et al., 1995; Beneria and Roldan, 1987). However, the nature of work at home is diverse and covers an ample variety of activities. For this study, I consider work at home "...as the production of goods or services in the worker's household for monetary or barter exchange" (Oberhauser, 1993).

Home-based work refers to self-employment and small businesses established in the homes of women. For example, commerce and service activities such as production of foodstuffs, handcrafting, marketing groceries, catalog marketing (tupperware, cosmetics, clothes), child care, hair styling, sewing and professional services such as dentistry, accounting and cosmetology are different forms of work at home.

All these activities can be carried out at the employer or employee's home, where work is done according to unfixed, flexible schedules, and income is frequently irregular. In addition, this kind of work can be informal or formal, depending on if the businesses are taxed or not, and as a result, workers may not enjoy regular salaries and labor benefits.

Working at home is heterogeneous in terms of the kinds of activities, material resources, labor conditions, and individual and family situations involved, as well as with respect to women's motivations and experiences. What distinguishes this type of work is that it takes place in households using both home space and resources. Thus, the uniqueness of these activities is their location.

According to the National Survey of Urban Employment (ENEU), 20% of Tijuana's economically active population is working as self-employed labour in

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1 To some authors the increase of female participation in self-employment might be related to the growing percentage of female heads of household, and the strong participation of women with small children (Oliveira, op.cit.).
Tijuana. In particular, the National Survey of Microenterprises (ENAMIN) conducted in 1992 reports that 15% of the population working in microenterprises are self-employed and working at home. Out of this population, 73% are men and 27% are women, working at home with or without proper installations. However, it is presumed that women's participation in work at home is larger than the data reflects. This underestimation might be due to the use of categories that hide this type of work as well as the fact that many women home-based workers are declared as nonwage family workers.

Despite the increasing recognition of segregation in the informal sector expressed in the existence of specific forms of employment in which women are concentrated, such as petty commodity producers, street vendors and home-based workers, these modes of work have not been studied in detail. Most important, studies about dealing with the informality of working at home in Latin American countries have mainly focused on the features of labor and the businesses (Menjivar y Perez, 1993; González de la Rocha, 1986; Aguirre, 1988; Escobar, 1988). Only a few of them have considered the household as a focus of analysis, and despite the fact that space is implicit in this research, it has usually been taken for granted and not studied as a critical factor in home production.

Thus, in addressing working at home as an increasingly evident economic strategy, and because space merits greater consideration as a variable in work-family adjustment than it has received, this paper analyzes the intersection of space and gender at the scale of the household. I will show some of the concrete ways in which home-based work and reproductive activities are worked out by women in time and space. In exploring the spatial outcomes of paid work at home I will examine how the re-use of space constrains or helps women to negotiate gender relations and the consequences for their social status.

**WOMEN’S WORK, GENDER AND HOUSEHOLDS**

Conventionally, the home is defined physically and symbolically as a private place where domestic activities and family affective relationships take place away from the public world of work (Saegert and Winkel, 1980:41). Conversely, the public is everything that occurs outside the home and the social relations not ascribed to kinship, conjugality and friendship (Barbieri, 1990). Most importantly, the home is a

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2 This is both a conceptual and empirical problem, for instance, these kind of activities are commonly seen as informal due to the fact that most businesses do not pay taxes. However, there is a problem with equating self-employment with informality because at least for the case of home-based workers, some of them pay taxes and provide social benefits to their employees.
place for leisure; a non-working space. Work in the home is generally not conducted on a wage basis and it is mostly done by women.

Feminist scholarship in human geography has criticized these gender biased definitions of the home, emphasizing that the household, considered as a physical and social space, is not a private and static place only for reproduction. Feminist geographers consider the home as a dynamic space where production also takes place, and the distinction between private and public is blurred (Oberhauser, 1993:2). In these terms, the household is a significant productive environment for women.

The spatial dimension of women's work has also been addressed by feminist geographers. They study economic processes and how these are both affected by, and influence, economic and social relations in the household. This approach focuses on the spatial dimension of family arrangements and strategies of social reproduction, emphasizing the gendered and changing nature of the relation between production and reproduction as part of a single process that varies in time and space (McDowell, 1989:59; Pratt and Hanson, 1991; Mackenzie, 1986). The focus is on how household arrangements are worked out in time and space.

This type of analysis addresses gender relations and the use and construction of space at the level of the household. This approach focuses on social practices in everyday life and proposes a reconceptualization of the domestic space. It holds that women are breaking the theoretical separation between work and home, reproduction and production. In the light of this theoretical approach, some studies have shown that women are creatively using and producing their living spaces and home resources for paid work. By working at home, women make their own time-space arrangements, use household resources, and create new uses of domestic space challenging the content and meaning of their roles (Pratt and Hanson, 1991; Mackenzie, 1986; McDowell, 1989).

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

As a part of a broader project about home-based work, I interviewed women from occupations such as sewing, dentistry, home baking, hair cutting, assembling, marketing, childcare and seamstressing. I contacted women in working class and middle class neighborhoods by the snowball sampling technique.

Most women interviewed are married and have children under eighteen. Women's ability to work at home changes as they move across the life course (Katz and Monk, 1993). Thus, while women under 40 are raising their children and experience some difficulties in balancing family and work, women older than 40
WOMEN’S HOME-BASED WORK...

have more room to develop their productive activities at home because their children are older and some of them have married.

Among the interviewees, class differences are expressed in the level of education and type of activity that women do. While middle class women hold higher levels of education, working class women workers hardly complete primary school. Most of the interviewees had formal jobs before engaging in work at home, two of them were housekeepers, and only one had a long trajectory as a home-based worker.

WOMEN’S REASONS FOR WORKING AT HOME

Regarding the motives for creation of a home-based business, data from the ENAMIN inform us that both women and men cited “independence” as the main cause for working at home. Among the interviewees, while working class women entered home-based work because of economic need, middle class women declared “being independent” as an important reason to work at home.

Motives for entering home-based work vary across the life course. Older women prefer to work at home because they cannot get a job in the market, avoid formal responsibilities and can easily re-make their daily schedules.

“At my age it is difficult to work in a beauty shop, it implies more responsibility. If you do not feel well, you have to tolerate any inconvenience. If one morning I feel sick I cannot go to work, I feel I cannot do formal schedules anymore. Conversely, if I work at home I do not have any problem because if I do not feel well, I can call my customer and make up the appointment.” Consuelo, 63, hair styler, living alone with one of her children.

According to the ENAMIN when home-based workers were asked about the motives for their work location most of them, women and men, said that it was more comfortable. However, this option was higher among women (75.7%) than among men (63.6%). To men, the second cause for home location was because they could not afford a premises for their businesses. In addition, 11.6% of them declared that home location was required to do their work. Most of the responses of the interviewed women are consistent with the above information. Married women with children decided to work at home because ideally they could set their own schedules according to family needs. To these women, unfixed schedules allow them to combine productive and reproductive activities.

To sum up, working at home results from a combination of factors for each woman. For example, independence and the absence of jobs promote self-employment, in addition to economic need and the flexibility to combine domestic
work and work at home. However, as we will see later on, working at home can often be problematic and women have to implement new and different time-space strategies to face the conflict between family and paid work at home across the life course.

HOME-BASED WORK ORGANIZATION IN TIME-SPACE: ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Feminist geographers have illustrated the ways in which home-based women workers are using and reproducing space in everyday life. By working at home women attempt creative solutions to the problems of fixed schedules of formal employment, long journeys to work, low-paid jobs, and economic crisis (Mackenzie, 1989; Dyck, 1989; Watson, 1991; Pratt and Hanson, 1993; Friberg, 1993.) However, because women continue to be responsible for most of the domestic work, home-based productive work often creates tensions and conflicts. Negotiating the two rounds in the space of the home can be complicated and even oppressive for women. After showing the diversity of schedules and uses of domestic space that women practice in order to work at home, I will focus on some of the conflicts that this strategy causes for homeworkers and their families, as well as the challenging ways in which women face these problems.

WHEN DO WOMEN WORK? UNCOMMON WORK SCHEDULES

There are of course advantages to working at home, such as flexibility of schedules. For instance, women can pace their own hours and combine productive and domestic responsibilities. Women may also feel liberated from fixed job schedules and may have more control over their lives (Salmi, 1993). It allows them to reschedule, increase or decrease work in order to accommodate particular family needs.

Among the women workers interviewed, work is heterogeneous and ranges from a couple of hours up to 50 hours a week. I also found diverse work schedules; women work on weekends, at night, in the morning, depending on their reproductive and productive activities. For instance, women frequently take advantage of mornings, when children are at school, to do their home-based work. Sometimes women workers at home have to set work schedules according to the needs of their customers. An example of this practice is the case of a children's
dentist who works only during the afternoons when children have time to attend the appointments.

In other cases, women work only on weekends. For instance, a woman who produced foodstuffs used to work on weekends due to space restrictions in her home where the kitchen was also used as a living room. By working on weekends, when the family schedule is relaxed, she also avoids the conflict between cooking for her family and cooking the foodstuffs she and her daughter sell outdoors in their neighborhood.

Many women work by appointment due to the flexibility of this arrangement. For example, if the client cannot attend the appointment, she/he can call to postpone or cancel it, and by being at home the woman home-based worker can continue doing domestic chores. This would not be possible if they were working outside the home. This is the case for a hairdresser who said:

"Working at home is more comfortable. I set the schedule with my customers, they call to make appointments and it makes it easier to organize my work." Consuelo, 63 years old, living alone with one of her children.

These time arrangements seem to work well for some women, however, other women sometimes work more intensively than if they were working outside the home because their unfixed schedules may result in longer work days. For example, Mariana is a seamstress who works at home when her husband and children are sleeping, and Tony distributes pharmaceutical products and has a long work day because she has an unfixed schedule and her clients call her and come to her home any time which interrupts her family life.

Space expresses the blurred distinction between production and reproduction within the household. Research on the topic has shown that women often engage in both kinds of activities at once in a single space (Mackenzie, 1986; Christensen, 1993). For example, in my own case studies the seamstress sews at the same time as doing the family's laundry and the diapers' seller interrupts packing products for tending her children.

Some studies depict work at home as occurring simultaneously with domestic work (Christensen, 1993; Oberhauser, 1993). However, this is not always the case because while both activities are carried out in the domestic space, they are not necessarily taking place at the same time (García-Ramon, 1995). There are some productive activities which demand concentration and women cannot do anything else at the same time. Work schedules reflect differences according to the domestic or non-domestic character of the activities. For example, due to the domestic nature of their paid activities such as baking goods and childcare, women can do their reproductive practices at the same time. In these conditions paid work is an extension of family life. However, this is not the case for professional activities.
such as dentistry. For example, due to the higher concentration that this work requires, a dentist cannot attend a patient while simultaneously cooking.

WHERE IN THE HOUSE ARE WOMEN WORKING?

Home-based women workers look for alternative ways of organizing their paid activities in the microgeography of their homes. They are creating new uses of space, e.g., using bedrooms and kitchens temporarily as work spaces, and remodeling yards, laundry and T.V. rooms, and building extra rooms to carry out paid work (Mackenzie, 1991:89).

Home work arrangements have to do with available home space. According to my own interviews, women transform home spaces into temporary working areas such as the kitchen where, using domestic equipment and appliances such as the oven, they produce foodstuffs. Frequently, the living room and the bedroom are also temporary work spaces. While the living room becomes a waiting room for a dentist, the bedroom can be the fitting room for a seamstress or the consulting room for a cosmetologist.

Many times women work in restricted spaces and inadequate environmental conditions, for instance home-based workers complain about not having enough light and space to work at home. It seems to be worse for poor women who have less room to develop their home-based activities (Watson, 1991). Conversely, middle class women sometimes have the chance to remodel their homes to permanently establish their productive activities. For example, among my interviewees, while the seamstress adapted the T.V. room as a workshop, the dentist restored the laundry room to install her consulting room, and a diapers' seller built a roof in the yard of her house under which she packed the product.

Having a special place within the home to do their productive work might help women to balance the relationship between family and work and redefine the content and meaning of gender roles and relations. However, as I will show in the following section, changes in the physical space do not always contribute to a change in social relations, or changes may cause new conflicts that have to be renegotiated.
CONFLICTS, CONTRADICTIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Activities that are taking place in the same space may create a conflict for women. For some of them it is difficult to try and separate work and family in the home. Usually women are not conscious about space and the conflicts it may cause for family relations. Although women clearly perceive the conflict between family and work, they do not always perceive it as related to the use and transformation of the domestic space into a workplace, in the sense of both material and social space.

The strategies used by home-based workers to deal with the conflict between their productive and reproductive activities are diverse. Some arrangements are partial or temporal, others are more permanent, but women continuously have to make decisions depending on their family and work situations. Although there are class differences in the use of the home as a workplace, in what follows I introduce the case studies of three middle class women that present evidence of how and in what conditions they decide to rearrange their work-at-home strategy. These women are diverse with respect to the life cycle and their level of education. The names of the women have been changed to protect their identities. The quotations I include in the text come directly from the interviews I held with these women.

WHEN WORKING AT HOME BENEFITS FAMILY DEMANDS BUT NOT WORK DEMANDS

Rosa is a 43 year old dentist and a mother of two children who works at home. When she was younger she wanted to be an elementary school teacher but her parents encouraged her to enter the university and she decided to study odontology. After finishing her studies she started teaching at the university and some time later she took a graduate program. When she got married she continued her academic career at the university. At that time she lived in Mexico City and while working at the university as a program coordinator of public health, she first established a consulting room in a bedroom at her home. Her parents took care of her children while she attended to her patients who were neighbors, friends, and co-workers. Because of economic circumstances, her husband was working outside of Mexico City and the income she obtained from the consulting room was very important for the family's economy. In 1992 she and her husband and children moved to Tijuana because they were tired of Mexico City's pollution and way of life. Rosa and her family live in a two story house in a middle class neighborhood near the sea. Her husband bought the house thinking that it had enough space for the consulting room.
Rosa would prefer to work outside the home to better achieve her professional aspirations but because her children are small (9 and 6 years old), she remodeled the laundry room to install the consulting room in the house so as to be close to the children. Rosa really liked her work as a professor and researcher but she decided to interrupt her professional career for 5 years in order to dedicate her time to her small children. After that period of time she plans to return to academia, the field in which she is more experienced.

In these conditions, working at home benefits family demands but not work demands. Although Rosa planned to prioritize her family for a 5-year period, she could not deny her professional aspirations and thus she decided to open the consulting room in her home. After some months of working at home as a dentist, she experienced conflict between her family and her work because she had more patients than she expected. Working at home started to be intrusive on her family life and she said she felt she was losing control over it. In addition, her husband complained that she did not take good care of the children. Rosa narrates the situation:

"When the number of patients increased, I did not look after my children. I am a dentist and children come to see me in the afternoons because during mornings they are at school. Then, I stopped supervising the children's homework, and my kids changed radically. They watched T.V. all the time because there was nobody to take care of them and they only ate cereal and cookies."

Then, she decided to attempt another strategy to pay more attention to her children at the same time as maintaining the consulting room. She said:

"A mother cannot divide herself in two. I analyzed the situation and I had to adopt new policies, establish schedules, and increase the rates, and in that way I reduced the number of patients. Since then, I have time to see Ale, now I know his books and what he is doing for school. I did lose three months of the life of my kid and I did not like it because we (mothers) encourage them (kids) very much. I did a master's degree but I know that the work a mother does at home is harder than any other, and we do not have a school for that kind of work."

But the tension between family and work continued and she had to rearrange the situation trying to balance the equation once again. The first time I met her, she let me in by the front door of her home and the interview took place in the dining room. At that time, she told me that because of the tension that her double role was causing her she was thinking of closing the consulting room. She wanted to be a "good mother" as she thought she had been in the past. Our following meeting took place in the consulting room, this time I was a patient. When I arrived at her home, a maid whom I had not seen before received me and asked me to wait in the front yard of the house where there was a small table and a couple of garden chairs which served as waiting room. After a while, Rosa met me. Dressed in a dentist's robe with a childlike print she invited me to go into the
consulting room through the service door. She really treated me as a patient but after a while we talked about my work and she told me that the interview had been very helpful to her because afterwards she realized the amount of work she did both in the home and in the consulting room. She hugged me and she said that she had talked to her husband about the interview and the things that she had learned from it. She told her husband that he and the children were exploiting her. At the same time she laughed and stated that "now, my husband hates you".

It was evident that after our first meeting she had second thoughts about closing the consulting room, and she had instead decided to hire a maid (who also works as her assistant) to clean the house and look after the children while she was working in the consulting room. Through this new arrangement, domestic work and child care were better organized and she could attend to her patients without worrying about her children. In addition, the new schedules and fares she established diminished the number of clients she had while allowing her more time to be with her children.

Rosa was able to implement this strategy because her husband supported her decision and also because she had money to hire a maid. In general, while middle class women may partially resolve the work-family conflict by hiring someone to help them with domestic chores, poor women delegate this work to daughters.

A DISPUTE FOR HOME SPACE

Additional conflicts come out as a result of working at home because women have to share the home space with other family members, creating a dispute over home places such as the bedroom, the living room, and the kitchen. This is the case of Elsa, a 33 year old mother of three children who packs and distributes diapers. Like many people in Tijuana she and her family are migrants. She was born in Campeche, in southern Mexico. In that city she studied until the first year of Law because she got married at 19. At that time she was also working as a secretary. After she married, she went to live in Puebla with her husband and there she entered the university to study psychology but dropped out when she was in the first year because she got pregnant. Elsa arrived in Tijuana in 1990 with her husband and three children because her husband, a salesman, was offered a job promotion. However, because of the economic

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3 Within a perspective that promotes feminist methods of research, I found that the interview opened up possibilities for women’s consciousness-raising.
crisis that affected the whole country in 1994, her husband, who was afraid of being fired, decided to open the diapers business and asked her to be in charge of it. As a salesman, Elsa's husband knew some contacts who helped him buy shoddy diapers from U.S. companies that discarded their defective diapers products. At the very beginning Elsa did not want to work in the business because she was afraid of not doing it well. Her husband consulted other distributors who taught them how to replace or fix the diapers' adhesive tapes as well as to quickly pack them.

Initially she packed the diapers in the living room but as the demand for diapers increased, they were all over the house and it soon proved to be a problem for her children and herself.

"I was packing the diapers in the living room, but my home was messy all the time and my kids could not watch T.V. I also feel that I was losing my home. Then, we decided to build a work space in the yard to pack the diapers."

Elsa had to negotiate the use of the home space with her three children and herself. To her, it was very important to maintain the home space and although they were at home, she and her children missed their home. Her husband did not experienced the same feeling because he travels constantly due to his job.

The home is a place that is continuously renegotiated, and to recover her domestic space Elsa re-located her paid work to the back yard. However, this new location in the rear of the home did not allow to her to supervise what her children were doing. Another socio-spatial conflict emerged when she realized that she could not do all the packing herself. The children helped her at first but after a while they protested and did not want to do it anymore. Thus, Elsa and her husband decided to hire her brother-in-law and his wife. The brother-in-law distributed the diapers in grocery stores, in low-income neighborhoods, and his wife and small daughter stayed at Elsa's home while the wife helped her pack the product. Elsa's relatives spent the whole day at her home, even on weekends, and she felt her space and privacy had been invaded. She was also concerned about her small nephew because of the danger of consuming the polymers (the content of diapers), and she had to keep an eye on him all the time. As the situation became more stressful, she asked her sister-in-law to do the work in her own home.

Although Elsa's sons cooperate by doing some of the cleaning, her double role taking place at home resulted in a burden on Elsa's workload because her husband and children demanded hot meals and clean clothes.

"The demand for diapers increased and I had to pack them all the time, so I did not make beds, I did not cook and when my husband arrived to home he complained about it. My children also missed cookies and pastries that I used to cook for them."
Finally, she could not resolve this conflict. While her husband asked her to run the business he did not cooperate with domestic chores. In spite of hiring two workers to help, working at home became oppressive to her. She used to work the whole day, juggling between packing diapers in inadequate environmental conditions and cleaning and cooking for the family.

When I called Elsa to schedule the interview, she agreed to meet me immediately and said that she needed to talk about her work at home to relieve herself. At that time, she had just closed the business. She said she would like to re-open it but outside the home to separate work from family issues, and in a place with better lighting conditions and with enough space to store the diapers.

WORKING AT HOME ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

Women's ability to work at home changes across the life course. While working at home is more difficult for women with small children, when children leave home or are adults their mothers have a greater chance to use the home as a workplace. This is the case of Tony, who works at home distributing pharmaceutical products. She lives in a three bedroom house with her husband and three daughters.

Tony was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco where she studied accounting, but since what she really wanted to be was a beautician, her family established a beauty shop for her in the garage of her parents' home. When she got married, she continued working as a beautician at her home where she installed a beauty parlor in one of the bedrooms. She used to work only during the time that her husband was out of the house. Her friends took care of her small children while she gave haircuts. She closed the beauty parlor when she moved to La Paz with her family. In this city, her husband asked her to work with him at a pharmaceutical products company. In 1988 the company moved them to Tijuana to open a branch. In 1992 the company closed the warehouse and asked them to administer the business on their own. While she and her husband continued working for the company as salaried workers, they established the distribution office at their home, just in front of the living room, because it was more convenient for the business. Initially, one of her daughters was in charge of the business but when she got a job related to her professional training, Tony decided to run the business herself.

Tony's daughters are in their twenties and they do not need much attention. Anyway, she recognizes that her working arrangement allows her more time to be at home and take care of her family. For example, although the business seems to be her priority, the kitchen is right there and she can take a look at what she is cooking while attending to her clients.
However, the workplace is materially and socially blurred with the domestic space, and the intrusion of work into the home required a careful negotiation among the members of her family. Tony said that since she was working at home, family and business issues were frequently blurred. To resolve this conflict she agreed with her husband and daughters to discuss work issues in the office, and family issues in the living room or some other part of the home.

Despite this arrangement, Tony’s work at home has been problematic for her because she did not set work schedules and their clients call at 7 in the morning or at 10 at night. Although she told clients to call and visit only during business hours, this was unsuccessful because her husband continued to answer the phone and receive them at the office at any time.

To sum up, both Rosa and Elsa, who have small children, found that by working at home they experienced constraints and conflicts between their paid work and their role as mothers. While Rosa changed the strategy to preserve her business at home, negotiating her professional expectations, Elsa closed her business because it was becoming oppressive to her. She felt trapped between the demands of work and her family’s complaints about abandoning them. Before her paid work at home, she was a full-time housewife and to her, it was more rewarding to be a mother and wife. Tony partially resolved the conflict between family and work through the mental separation of space but she could not set regular work schedules because of the interference of her husband.

The diversity of these home-based workers’ time-space strategies shows that working at home is a process related to the larger condition of women’s lives. It changes in its temporal and spatial character according to the conflicts that may result from its practice, depending on women’s activities, available home space and domestic resources, as well as the stage in the women’s life cycle.

**AMBIVALENT MEANINGS OF WOMEN’S DOMESTIC ROLES AND HOMEWORKING**

By working at home, women are changing their space and time patterns through their activities, breaking the separation between production and reproduction, and at the same time altering the content of gender and environment categories, as well as the meaning of home and work (Mackenzie, 1986; Watson, 1991). The conflict between family and work involves cultural ambivalence toward devaluation of mothering, homemaking activities, and the homemaker role (Saegert and Winkel, 1980:43).
Some of the main roles that define women’s gender identity in Latin American culture are: being a mother, wife and worker. However, these roles and their content are continuously challenged through women’s action in everyday life. The interviewees expressed the priority of children and home in their lives because through socialization they learned that a good mother was one who stayed at home, spent a lot of time with her children, feeding, bathing and caring for them (Christensen, 1993:58).

For instance, Rosa experienced contradictory feelings about family and work. Intrusion of work at home in her family life caused her to have feelings of devaluation of her role as a mother. She made different arrangements to cope with family and work and although she did not spend a lot of time with her children she felt better about being a good mother. Although she verbally expressed the priority of being a mother, this assumption was a source of conflict to her because in practice she wanted to continue with her paid work. She could not ignore her home-based occupation and the meanings attached to it. Being a worker was also an important part of her identity.

“I am satisfied with being a mother but not of being a professional. My occupation is being a mother, the other is an extra. However, I cannot erase myself, and disappear. The most important for me is the home, but at least I have the consulting room. If it disappears I would cry of sadness. I love it.” Rosa, 45 years old, dentist, two children.

Elsa also experienced the same feeling of not being a good mother, but since she is not a professional like Rosa, she did not have the same concern about her paid work. Educated women or women with previous work experience seem to be more concerned with developing their professional careers.

These home-based workers are also wives, and for the three women this was a very important role. As a traditional rule dictates “woman must follow her husband”, the three of them migrated to Tijuana because their husbands were looking for a better job. Husbands accepted the paid work of their wives but these women also had to fulfill their domestic duties to be good wives. Research carried out on working at home shows that although some husbands cooperate with domestic work and childcare, women generally are left with the responsibility of household care (Christensen, 1993). According to my own case studies, husbands and male children did not cooperate very much in household work. Women did not demand cooperation from their husbands because they consider them as the main providers. These women assume the role as supplementary income providers, their main role being as housekeepers. However, some women are trying to change the traditional division of labor by involving their male children in the making of beds, cleaning baths and some other domestic chores. On the other hand, in some cases, the husband and children participated in the women's productive activities.
The interviewees in my sample define themselves as domestic workers and as wage workers. However, some of them experience devaluation of their home-based work. On the one hand, some women define their work as professional as if they were doing it outside the home because they organize schedules, set appointments, just like any other doctor or lawyer.

On the other hand, working at home implies a lower status in the eyes of clients and misidentification of their work which can be disturbing for the women (Ahrentzen, 1997:82). Some people do not recognize women's professionalism because their work takes place at home and this may affect the confidence the clients have in them. In the words of Rosa:

"It is not the same to work at home as working outside the home. When you leave home, you cross the doorway and go to a clinic where you are Dr. Martinez, there you have the same salary as those of your same category. You have respect and a schedule. But when you are working at home, you are the Mrs. who is a dentist. But you are first the "Mrs." Then, I feel as if it were a secondary job. It would not be the same if I were working in a consulting room at a hospital. Thus, you are working in a consulting room but it is not the same. At home I cannot charge the same, and I do not feel good at all." Rosa, dentist, 45 years old, two children.

People's perceptions about working at home are attached to conventional definitions and the meaning of the home as a non-working place, as Rosa said:

"I do not think people will change their perception about my work. Particularly because their perceptions are based on appearance. When we go to the physician we look in the waiting room, and at the physical appearance of the secretary. Then, here (in my home) there is a baseball bat in the middle of the yard, and the seeds to feed the birds. This is not the ideal way of having a consulting room. It would never be. That is why I only attend to my friends and relatives."

Nevertheless, some husbands and children acknowledged women's home-based work. They did so not only because of the economic reward, but because they respected the women's skill and knowledge. This is particularly important for children's socialization where they may learn that working at home is as worthy as working outside the home.

"My daughter did not realize about my work until she saw that her friend's mothers only watched T.V. in the afternoons. Now she thinks that 'my mom is very creative', and she is proud of me." Mariana, seamstress, two children.

Women are supposed to think of their home more as an expression of their own identity. They also tend to see the meaning of the home as involving important relationships with other people and to feel that the home is a personalized place (Saegert and Winkel, 1980). That is why women home workers work only with people they know, or those introduced to them by relatives and friends, and in this way they do not want to break the intimacy of their families:
“My clients are my friends and neighbors. My home is not like an emergency room in a hospital, I cannot attend to anyone who knocks my door”. Rosa, 43 years old, dentist, two children.

According to Saegert and Winkel (1980:450), the home is a setting that establishes the boundary between public on-stage activities and private interpersonal pursuits. However, the use of home spaces is daily transformed through productive activities involving the juggling between private and public. Women homeworkers decide not only what home places can be public but also the persons they want to share it with. For example, the seamstress uses the bedroom as a fitting room only for those people she feels well-acquainted with and the bathroom for people she does not know very well. The public-private dichotomy sometimes prevails, sometimes vanishes, sometimes blurs. Working at home involves blurred and contradictory practices, relationships and meanings. On the one hand, women home-based workers transform different areas of the home to public places, and on the other, they want to preserve the privacy of their families and homes.

**IMPLICATIONS OF HOMEWORKING FOR WOMEN’S STATUS**

Women's status is a result of a variety of cultural and socioeconomic factors. Among these factors, Spain (1993) emphasizes physical segregation because it contributes to and perpetuates gender stratification by reducing women’s access to socially valued knowledge. Thus, women's social status is related to spatial segregation insofar as existing physical arrangements facilitate or inhibit the exchange of knowledge between women and other social agents. Measurement of spatial segregation has to do with patterns of use of space at different scales as well as with mobility (Spain, 1993; Katz and Monk, 1993). I will refer to mobility as a spatial indicator of women's status for the case of the home-based workers.

In the Latin American literature, some scholars point out that work at home reifies women's place in the home (Benería and Roldán, 1987, Barbieri and Oliveira, 1986; Chant, 1989, among others). White feminist literature demonstrates that there is a greater diversity in women's experiences derived from socio-spatial relations. While some women enjoy being at home, others experience isolation (Ahrentzen, 1997:84-5).

Among my case studies I found that some women do work at home because they enjoy being at home, this is the space they control better. A seamstress I interviewed converted the T.V. room into her workshop. The location of this room was strategic to her because from the workshop she could control everything that was going on in the home. In addition, working at home does not necessarily mean
that women are confined all the time because they often have to visit other sites and they meet and establish relationships with clients, suppliers, colleagues and professional organizations. Thus, spatial dynamics related to work at home might take place within or outside the home.

Places that home-based women workers go to and move around depend on their activity and home location. In my sample of home-based workers, I found that some women did not know the city and did not even know their neighborhood. It can be oppressive for women inasmuch as it impedes the development of their work at home and other daily activities. The degree of physical segregation of the home from the outside world will influence the use and meaning of the home as a workplace for women.

In general, the women home-based workers I interviewed have no mobility restrictions imposed upon them by their husbands. The restrictions are related to the knowledge of the city and their neighborhoods, as well as access to transportation. This is particularly true for older women and women from the lower-income sectors. Middle class home-based workers are more mobile because they or their families own a car. In addition to the sites women home-based workers visit in relationship to their paid work, in general they take their children to and from school, go shopping, and visit relatives and friends. Middle class families sometimes go out for dinner.

Finally, Spain (1993:144) suggests that the school and the workplace are more consequential to women's access to resources than the home because little valued knowledge is located in it. However, among women working at home, those who did not have professional education learned and practiced new kinds of knowledge through their work. For example, Elsa, the diapers' seller, had to be innovative in ways of packing the diapers in order to do it more quickly and efficiently. She also learned how to manage a business although she did not have any previous experience.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This paper focuses on the time-space strategies that home-based women workers implement in order to accommodate productive work at home. As social actors, women face the contradictions of their dual roles which are often expressed spatially. In analyzing some of these socio-spatial practices and interactions of women workers at home, I attempted to reveal the interrelationship between gender and spatial dimensions.
Working at home is a process related to the larger conditions of women's lives, as well as the specific circumstances in which they are working at home. As a process, home-based work results in a diversity of experiences. Case studies show that home is a place that is continuously renegotiated. Working at home can be an integrative strategy that allows women to combine productive and reproductive work. But working at home may also result in a conflict that women intend to resolve by remodeling and reusing household space and establishing their own schedules. While restricted home places and inadequate environmental conditions might be oppressive for some home-based women workers, case studies also show that women's management of the household as a workplace helps them and their families to revaluate working at home as well as their domestic roles thus opening up possibilities for an improvement in the condition of women.

This study contributes to the literature on the topic to explain the ways in which home environments are pervasively gendered and how women have changed their use. The constant interaction between women and their living space helps them to redefine gender roles and relations, as well as the social ascriptions of what home and work are.

Working at home does not sustain the ideology that privatizes the home and renders it fully domestic (Ahrentzen, 1997:77). With home-based work, the home can be a public, dynamic site in which women are experiencing a diversity of relationships. By producing their homes as workplaces, women may have more chance of establishing control over their lives. Consequently, the spatial consideration of productive practices can help us to a better understanding of the specific modes of work and the consequences for women and family life.

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