Introduction

"What's wrong with working in my home?" asked a woman I interviewed in 1986 as she sat at her kitchen table winding thin, colored wires through a small core to make transformers for a central New York electronics firm. Her question arose in the context of our discussion of the State Labor Department's depiction of her job as exploitative, substandard work. Though I was well acquainted with the history of the exploitative conditions associated with industrial homework in the United States, I could not give her an unequivocal answer. In fact, I was becoming more confused about this question as I talked to homeworkers who emphasized the benefits working at home brought them and their disdain for those who sought to protect them from exploitation: "People's impression of homeworkers is that we're all dummies because we're exploited. But people doing homework are capable of doing many other jobs. People think those doing homework can't hold another job or don't know any better. If you're saying a person is exploited, you're saying they're dumb" (Interview 23).

These comments were made in the context of electronics assemblers' desperate fight to keep their homework jobs in the face of a New York State Labor Department effort to apply its anti-homework laws to their work. The point of view they express was echoed by others around the country whose previously hidden work was brought to the public eye in the midst of controversy over the Reagan Administration's attempt to repeal federal homework statutes.[1] Despite the positive publicity given to work-at-home programs for white-collar workers and professionals, which presented home-based work as a gender-neutral option that could provide a reasonable income and a flexible work arrangement for men or women, homework opponents recognized the fact that the overwhelming majority of homeworkers are now, and always have

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been, women—most of whom are in low-wage service and industrial occupations with the potential to be denied basic worker rights such as the legal minimum wage.

The debate that took place through the popular press and at congressional hearings brought forth the voices of homeworkers, prohomework and anti-homework employers, labor unions, public officials, journalists, and academics, and revealed the complex and contradictory realities of the homework issue. How could it be that working from home was perceived simultaneously as exploitative and liberating, as an expression of worker choice and a reflection of the lack of choice, as a creative strategy for combining family and work and the embodiment of women's "double burden," as a worker's right and a worker's denial of rights?

Since the beginning of my endeavor to explore the realities of contemporary home-based work, I have struggled to reconcile homeworkers' perceptions of their work with a broader understanding of its contradictory effects in their lives and its role in eroding wage rates and working conditions for other workers. For many women homework is a practical and desirable option given their household responsibilities and labor market position. But, as Boris (1987) has argued, while the ability to work at home may be relatively beneficial for some, for the most part homework helps to maintain the subordinate position women, as a group, hold at home and on the labor market. 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 labor 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. Furthermore, homework has historically undercut factory and office work by cheapening the cost of labor and overhead for employers. Thus, in homework we see the confluence of household and labor market dynamics, each conditioned by the traditional gender division of labor.

But there is a huge gap between analysis of the exploitative nature of most home-based work and a clear agenda for transforming household and labor market relations in a way that would improve conditions for homeworkers. The voices we heard in the public debates of the 1980s revealed that there is often a disjunction between the reality of people's everyday lives, which often forces them to "choose" homework from a limited and poor set of employment options (and to fight for the right to make that "choice") and a broader vision of better working conditions for

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all workers, which would include the end of exploitative homework. This rift is readily visible in the contemporary politics surrounding the issue. While the political right attempts to remove restrictions on home-based work across the board, opponents of homework, particularly labor unions, fight to prohibit it entirely.[2] In this debate, which places the issue in an either-or framework (the absence of all restrictions on homework versus complete elimination of homework), neither position speaks to the needs of most homeworkers. While the latter have tended to support conservatives in their effort to keep homework legal, they do so out of the need to preserve their incomes. The conservative agenda, however, is to maintain homework as a cheap, flexible production option for industry, which guarantees the continued exploitation of most homeworkers. This is certainly not in their best interests. At the other end of the spectrum, a desire to eliminate the exploitative conditions associated with home-based work is the crux of liberal efforts to ban all homework. While homeworkers would benefit from an end to these conditions (subminimum wages and the absence of worker rights and protections such as social security insurance, health and safety provisions, overtime pay, and so on), they do not support the outright prohibition of home-based work. To do so would fly in the face of their struggle for economic survival.

The controversy over homework brings together two broader, interconnected struggles—the fight to improve wages and working conditions for all workers and the effort to develop a better and more equitable way for men and women to combine work and family life. In many ways, homework is the embodiment of the obstacles that have prevented us from accomplishing these goals in the past, for it is the fullest expression of the traditional gender division of labor as it simultaneously affects the household and labor market. But the contemporary politics of homework does not allow for the fact that efforts to attain these goals must be joint ones. They require renegotiation of gender roles in the home, worker organization to strengthen labor's position vis-à-vis capital, the strengthening of workers' efforts to transform the organization of work in a way that makes it more compatible with family needs, and public policies to support people's ability to satisfy both workplace and family demands without compromising either. The agents of such change will include workers as well as policy-makers and the organized groups that can influence them most. The polarized politics of homework has so far prevented us from proceeding to bridge the gap between these naturally inter-

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connected, yet artificially separated, terrains of struggle. But how can we get beyond this impasse?

This book is an attempt to propose a modest, yet important, starting point. In simple terms, its purpose is to clarify the role and significance of homework in the modern economy, to move beyond viewing it simply as an anomalous vehicle for worker exploitation occasionally imposed by capitalists. Instead, an understanding of the full dimensions of the homework dilemma requires its analysis from two points of view: as a creative strategy adopted by women workers whose employment options are limited by the gender division of labor in the household and the external labor market, and as a production option used by capital to lower labor costs and increase flexibility.

This dual perspective is necessary if we are to move beyond simplistic analyses that lead to reliance on "solutions" that leave the root of the homework problem intact. For example, liberal proposals to strengthen and extend homework regulation, while important, will not by themselves transform the conditions that foster the spread of exploitative home-based work. In fact, the focus on banning all homework has clearly separated those working for an end to exploitative homework from homeworkers themselves. It seems to me that those who have fought hardest for regulatory action (most notably, labor unions) implicitly underestimate the significance of the worker-led impetus for homework, which springs from the gender division of labor within households. While they understand the impetus for homework that comes from capital, and thus focus their efforts on blocking employers' ability to utilize this production option, they have not come to terms with the immediate impact of their actions on those they seek to protect. While homework opponents have a longer-term, more comprehensive view of the potential benefits to all workers of ending exploitative homework, their strategy for reaching this goal seems to deny the importance of homeworkers themselves as agents of change.

In order to overcome the conceptual and practical barriers that keep apart those who should be allies in the fight to end exploitative homework, we must recognize the impact of the social, as well as the economic, relations that underlie and support the "homework system." This means that gender must be placed at the center of our analytical framework. It also means that we must move beyond the past tendency to see homework as a marginal form of work that can be stamped out with appropriate regulatory action. Instead, it is important to acknowledge that

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homework has served as a relatively permanent vehicle for the incorporation of a significant portion of the female labor force into the capitalist production process and that deep-rooted social forces support its continuance. Homework derives from the confluence of women's contradictory role as laborers in the sphere of paid production and unpaid workers in the sphere of reproduction. Any attempt to eliminate exploitative homework must focus equal attention on transforming women's position in both spheres.[3] It must bring together struggles in the home with struggles in the workplace. Concretely, women homeworkers must be able to pursue an alternative model for combining family and work responsibilities—one that would be free of the power inequities that currently characterize their home and work lives. Such a model might very well include home-based work, but under a fundamentally new set of social and economic conditions.

With this in mind, we can propose an analytical framework that allows for a multidimensional approach to an analysis of the homework system. On one level, the study of homework must involve an understanding of how the gender division of labor simultaneously affects household and labor market relations. At the same time, we must consider how those social relations affect and are affected by economic forces. Accordingly, my approach is to combine analysis of processes that occur on a microlevel (in households) with those that occur on a macrolevel; to place the analysis of homework in a global economic and historical context that allows us to see the relationship between local, regional, and global patterns of economic development and the strategies for survival pursued by workers whose actions are conditioned by a variety of social and economic forces (gender division of labor, cultural practices, economic conditions, for example).

Accordingly, I have come to view the study of homework, first and foremost, as the study of the interaction of capital and labor—of the forces and dynamics of capitalist development and of human agency as it responds to and helps shape those forces and dynamics. But in addition to understanding how capital and labor interact to affect economic development and foster the proliferation of particular forms of work such as homework, we need to consider how the state fits into the picture. Underlying the analysis that runs through my work is the assumption that the homework system has been forged through the interaction of all three actors: capital, labor, and the state. It is on this point that I hope to move beyond the predominant focus on capital and labor in much of the homework literature. An understanding of the rela-

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tionship between capital and labor, and each one's ability to realize its particular interests with regard to homework, depends on our ability to recognize the state's role as an *active* mediator—one that injects its own interests into the arena of class conflict it actuates. Accordingly, while the actions of capital, labor, and the state reflect specific interests, all three, in combination, have played an important role in the development of homework as a structural feature of the modern economy.

Key Issues in the Investigation of Homework

Chapter 2 presents a picture of the lives of homeworkers as revealed to me by those I interviewed. I examine their labor market position, household organization, family economy, and strategies for coping with rural poverty. My research adds substance to the collection of available case studies from advanced industrial countries because it covers a nontraditional group of industrial homeworkers and helps broaden our conception of the people involved in this type of work. While most historical and contemporary case studies in the United States focus on legal and illegal immigrants in urban areas, my study reveals the use of rural, nonimmigrant, working- and middle-class women in homework operations.[4] Thus, it challenges the myth that homework is simply a past chapter in the history of American workers' fight for decent employment—a chapter thought to be revisited only in isolated and unusual circumstances, such as those associated with large-scale immigration.

My study also provides an interesting perspective on the impetus behind the spread of homework in recent decades. In this case, an enclave of homework production was created in the 1960s not simply as a result of its imposition by employers seeking a cheap source of labor, but also through women's efforts to forge work alternatives in the context of a depressed local economy, the physical isolation imposed by rural life, and household and childcare responsibilities. Homework in central New York developed in the context of community networks of family and friends, which linked rural women to urban-based national and multinational electronics firms. It came to be perceived on all sides as a production option that could be mutually beneficial to the companies and the communities they operated around. This case can, therefore, shed light on the importance of worker agency in

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shaping economic development—a factor highlighted in recent analyses of industrial restructuring, such as Benton's insightful study of the informal economy and industrial development in Spain (1990), and Mingione's analysis of the importance of both economic and social factors in forging work alternatives in societies around the world-economy (1991). My case study, though a modest contribution, may provide further support for the analytical framework suggested in these pathbreaking works.

In chapter 3 I examine the conditions under which homework becomes a viable production option for modern enterprise as well as its relationship to current strategies employed in the global restructuring of capitalist production. Many of the questions that shaped my research agenda have been asked by others who have sought to examine the role of homework in the world-economy with peripheral and semi-peripheral countries as their starting point. For example, in their study of homeworkers in Mexico City, Beneria and Roldan (1987) shed light on the close articulation between formal and underground (legal and illegal) productive activities and their relation to the production networks of multinational corporations. More recently, Benton's (1990) analysis of "productive decentralization" in Spain seeks to explain how unregulated forms of production, including homework, are part of complex and varying patterns of industrial restructuring, and, thus, central to modern capitalism. The information I obtained about the production strategies of three electronics firms in central New York is presented and analyzed in view of more general patterns of industrial restructuring across the world-economy. One of my objectives is to shed light on the social and economic processes that link women in core, semiperipheral, and peripheral countries through a global production system, while at the same time recognizing the different patterns of industrial organization and employment that emerge in different places at different times.

While analyses of current patterns of industrial restructuring allow us to see how unregulated or "casualized" forms of production have expanded under crisis conditions, it is important to see beyond the crisis and analyze homework from a broader historical and theoretical perspective. While past and contemporary studies have recognized homework as a distinctive vehicle for the exploitation of women, ironically, the association of this form of production with women has, at the same time, obscured its significance in analyses of capitalist development. For the most part, it has been presented as a conjunctural phenomenon (tied to eco-

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nomic crisis), a transitional phenomenom, or an antiquated survival of a past stage in capitalist development. These views follow, in part, from our inability to get past the artificial separation between work and home, productive and reproductive spheres. Because of women's conceptual relegation to the latter, the significance of their work for capitalist production has often been obscured. This is certainly true with regard to waged homework. Despite its occasional splash of visibility in urban centers (where it can be readily identified as a source of super-exploitation of the most powerless women, such as immigrants) homework has remained hidden in the home—integrated with unpaid, reproductive activities. The task at hand is to open the doors and windows to get a glimpse of what Marx called the "outside department of the factory" (and in today's economy, the office).

Accordingly, the underlying thesis of chapters 4 and 5 is that homework is a structural rather than a conjunctural feature of modern capitalism. In chapter 4 I trace the historical origin of industrial homework, highlighting its emergence as a form of production in the mid-nineteenth century and its relationship to other types of domestic production such as the putting-out system. I argue that by the nineteenth century putting-out became transformed into a new "system of industry," industrial homework, characterized by a fundamentally different set of relations between capital and capitalist-controlled domestic labor. Through reassessment of conventional views, which see centralized production as the optimal and inevitable tendency in capitalist development, (those of labor process theorists such as Braverman [1974] and Marglin [1971]), I demonstrate how industrial homework "fits in" with modern capitalism.

After opening the theoretical space for an understanding of homework's place in the modern economy, I turn to the task of uncovering the economic and social factors that have supported its use over the last century. The insights offered in recent analyses of the role of informal productive activities, often referred to as the informal sector, have guided my work. For example, Mingione (1991) emphasizes the interplay of social and economic factors in creating heterogeneous forms of work across the world-economy. He identifies the global economic and organizational trends that support the continued expansion of informal activities (economic downturn and slow growth, vertical disintegration of firms, automation, tertiarization, for example) but emphasizes the simultaneous importance of social factors in determining patterns of work. In his view, an understanding of the "social economy,"

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that is, "socio-economic phenomena such as informal activities, self-provisioning, the economic role of the family and ethnic relationships and the variety of household work strategies" (1), must replace an analysis of informal activities that focuses only on their "macroeconomic origins and impact." The importance of Mingione's perspective for my work is that it supports the incorporation of gender into an analysis of capitalist development. Concretely, it allows us to move beyond simply seeing gender relations as creating a group of workers particularly susceptible to exploitation—as a passive variable in the process of capitalist development. Instead, gender can be brought to the center stage by extending the logic of Mingione's perspective. The task at hand is to understand the ways in which gender relations condition the development of the "social economy." Homework provides a unique opportunity for such understanding. Similarities in the social relations that underlie it cut across cultures and regions of the world.

Chapter 5 expands on the conceptual framework laid out in chapter 4 by considering how the gender division of labor in capitalist society simultaneously conditions the development of the production process and guarantees the availability of a female labor force whose paid work is conceptualized differently from men's, with substantial consequences for wages, working conditions, and terms of employment. A critique of dual labor market theory serves as a point of departure for my analysis. While the former provides a useful description of divisions in the labor market (for example, the concentration of women in low-status, low-paying jobs), it does not explain how those divisions develop historically. It simply takes for granted what needs to be explained. More specifically, while dual labor market theorists focus on the role played by technological, market, and control factors in the emergence of different forms of work (how these factors present particular options to capitalists), understanding how patterns of labor force participation develop over time requires consideration of how ideology, culture, labor-capital conflict, and conflict among different groups in the labor force affect the incorporation of groups divided along gender, racial, and ethnic lines. An analysis of homework provides an important point from which to uncover the limitations of dual labor market theory and construct an alternative approach that allows us to see how the sexual division of labor in the home affects the development of the capitalist production process (as opposed to simply fitting into it) and helps create segmented labor markets.

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In this chapter I argue that gender ideology has created an artificial distinction between men's and women's work, which brings the latter to the labor market saddled with the weight of assumptions about the conditional nature of their paid work. In homework we see the full expression of the dual effect of this ideology. First, the availability of a labor force assumed to be composed of supplementary wage earners with a marginal commitment to paid work and a primary commitment to household and childcare responsibilities conditions the development of the production process: home-based work emerges as a possible option for capitalists precisely because of the unique circumstances of a segment of the labor force. At the same time, assumptions about the conditional nature of women's paid work set up barriers that limit their points of entry to the labor market. This, in turn, makes homework a practical work option for women, given their relatively limited set of job possibilities. Thus, a vicious cycle is set in motion.

While chapters 2 through 5 focus on different dimensions of the labor-capital relation and the confluence of household and labor market dynamics, in chapter 6 I attempt to clarify the ways in which state action affects and is affected by both. Here I insert the last piece of a conceptual puzzle that recognizes the interaction of all three "actors"—capital, labor, and the state—in the forging of the homework system. I focus on state policy in the United States and how it has shaped the organization of homework in this country over the course of the twentieth century. I argue that state policy has affected the pattern of homework's use in at least four ways. First, protective labor legislation has played a role in creating conditions fostering the expansion of homework during certain periods. For example, in the early part of the century, the passage of laws that regulated the hours and conditions of women's and children's employment encouraged the decentralization of work in some traditional female occupations and the consequent proliferation of homework. Second, variation in state-level homework regulation has led to the concentration of homework in states without, or with weak, homework laws. Furthermore, regional variation in enforcement efforts has affected the spatial distribution of homework across states and within states (between rural and urban areas). Third, the uneven application of state and federal homework laws across industries has created a split between legal and illegal homework operations. In prohibited industries homework has been pushed underground and characterized by wages and working conditions below those

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set by legal statute. At the same time, some homework carried out in accordance with prevailing labor standards has existed in nonprohibited industries and under permit procedures established by state and federal regulations. Finally, the fact that state legislation has helped shape the organization of production in homework operations is revealed in the outcomes of worker and employer responses to homework laws. Reliance on the contractor or middleman as an organizational mechanism to mediate between firms and the homeworkers they hire developed as employers sought ways to insulate themselves from liability under homework laws. Moreover, the "conspiracy of silence" upheld by many homeworkers in an effort to prevent government involvement that could lead to the elimination of their jobs has helped sustain the exploitative nature of most homework operations.

In addition to documenting the contradictory outcomes of state homework policy, my aim in chapter 6 is to expound on my critique of the contemporary politics of homework in the United States—to move beyond the narrow perspective in recent debates, which sees legislative reform as the solution (whether it be the conservative call to eliminate restrictions on homework in order to bring it out from underground or the liberal strategy to ban all homework outright). The focus on legislative reform misunderstands the contradictory nature of state action and the complex role of the state as an actor in the development of the homework system. Since the generally exploitative character of waged homework is rooted in the gender division of labor and the nature of the labor-capital relation, the state alone cannot be the source of its transformation or elimination. On the contrary, the state often helps to perpetuate the conditions that support exploitative homework. A close examination of the contradictory interests and actions of state agencies in the development of homework regulation since the turn of the century allows us to analyze the nature of the capitalist state and how it relates and responds to the demands of capital and labor with regard to homework.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I discuss the limitations of policy suggestions that have emerged in the United States from conventional debate between the political right and anti-homework liberals over the problem of exploitative homework. I consider more innovative policy proposals and propose directions for future research that might help uncover the deep-rooted obstacles that so far have blocked the structural transformations required to improve the lot of today's homeworkers.

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Different Types of Home-Based Work

Before moving on it is necessary to distinguish between various types of home-based work in order to clarify the difference between waged homework, historically characterized by highly exploitative conditions, and the home-based work of professionals and the truly self-employed. Each is characterized by fundamentally different working conditions, production and market relations, and wage and benefit levels. In both scholarly and popular debates about home-based work there has been a tendency to confound these vastly different categories. The confusion that results has significant implications for policy proposals, and has helped foster the dichotomous politics that leads people to take inherently contradictory general positions (completely prohomework versus completely anti-homework).

In the introduction to their edited collection of articles on homework, Boris and Daniels elucidate a key issue in the current debate over the spread of paid work in the home: "The issue posed by the current controversy is stark: will such labor encourage new forms of sweated industry which reinforce the existing sexual and racial divisions of labor and stymie worker self-organization, or can it serve as a basis for an alternative to mass production, a new organization of work which integrates home and workplace in a more organic, autonomous synthesis?"

As I hope to make clear in the chapters ahead, there is no simple answer to this question. The exploitative potential of paid work in the home varies with the particular characteristics of the work arrangements specific to different types of home-based work. While current proponents of homework tend to ignore the glaring differences between professional telecommuters and garment industry pieceworkers in their calls for the deregulation of homework, more serious analysts recognize that the experiences of different groups of home-based workers can be disparate. With varying wages, levels of job security, amounts of bargaining power, positions in the labor market, and working conditions, home-based workers may experience their work as more or less exploitative or accommodating (Gerson 1993; Christensen 1993). As a starting point in my analysis, therefore, it is important to define and distinguish between three general categories of home-based workers: the self-employed, waged homeworkers, and salaried professionals.

My purpose in delineating these categories is to identify waged workers who depend on their employers for the opportu-

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nity to do work and whose weak position in the labor market influences their decision to work at home. Distinguishing this group from home-based workers who are independent producers (the truly self-employed) or who choose to work at home from a position of strength on the labor market (salaried professionals) is important for an analysis of the implications of the spread of different types of paid work in the home.[5] Those in the former group are subjected to increasingly exploitative work arrangements while those in the latter may indeed have the potential to enjoy a more autonomous and flexible work experience.

Home-based self-employment appears to be on the rise, particularly among women. Since the early 1970s self-employment has increased steadily, reversing the pattern of steady decline that characterized the years between 1948 and 1972 (Fain 1980). This increase can be attributed, in part, to the dynamism of small-scale entrepreneurial activity in expanding service and information-processing industries—a dynamism fueled largely by a surge in business start-ups by women working out of their homes. Although self-employed men continue to outnumber their female counterparts, between 1975 and 1985 the number of self-employed women grew six times faster than the number of self-employed men. Almost half of the new businesses started by women in recent years (more than 300,000) are operated from the home (Silver 1989, 107).

In analyzing the implications of increasing self-employment from the home, it is important to recognize the gender gap that may exist with regard to earnings and prospects for employment stability. While men are concentrated in the goods-producing industries that saw a growth in self-employment through the 1970s, such as construction, self-employed women are concentrated in the trade and service industries and have a greater likelihood of operating from the home. Although the growth of home-based industries has been portrayed in the popular media as the key to economic success for women (Greengard 1984), a number of features commonly associated with such businesses indicate their heightened vulnerability to failure when compared with male businesses and with female businesses not operated from the home. According to Silver (1989), most women's businesses have annual receipts of under $5000. In addition, when compared to their female counterparts whose businesses are not operated from the home, "home-based businesswomen are more likely to start their own businesses without partners, use smaller start-up capital, have lower expenses, employ fewer people, and

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earn lower profits." Thus, the "precarious nature of many small businesses not only suggests that the contemporary surge in entrepreneurial homework is cyclical but also makes ambiguous the employment status of many who regard themselves as independent producers or contractors" (Silver 1989, 107).

Official data as well as recent analyses of self-employment trends fail to distinguish between the "true self-employed" and the "disguised self-employed" (Fain 1980; Kraut and Grambsch 1987). This distinction is particularly important when assessing the work experiences of self-employed homeworkers. Workers who are truly self-employed have direct contact with the market for their products and direct control over all aspects of their work.[6] Others, who may be designated officially as self-employed, participate in a classic employer-employee relationship with their opportunity to work dependent on a particular firm. The latter are typically subcontractors who supply goods at the behest of a single firm and whose operations are completely dependent on the demand of that firm. For example, many home-based assemblers in the electronics industry are officially classified as self-employed even though all aspects of their work (availability of work, control over work, setting of wages and hours) mirror those of an employee.[7]

Making the distinction between these two types of self-employed workers is important for an analysis of homework since their working conditions, standard of living, and life chances can be quite different. Furthermore, support for the deregulation of homework is based in large part on the assumption that homeworkers are independent, self-employed workers who do not require the same legal protections guaranteed to factory or office workers. But "disguised self-employed" homeworkers have more in common with factory and office workers than with workers who are truly self-employed. In fact, for analytical purposes, it is more appropriate to categorize them in the second group of home-based work: waged homework.

Waged homework is work performed on domestic premises for a specific employer. It is defined by the following characteristics. First, an employer or his contractor provides the opportunity to work and supplies raw materials needed in production. Second, the labor process is not directly supervised by the employer or contractor. Supervision and control by the employer does exist, however, in an indirect form. For example, while workers generally determine the pace, pattern, and method of their work, they usually have no control over what is produced, what wage rates

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are, and where and how products are marketed. Third, the product of the homeworker's labor is not for household consumption. Fourth, a contractor or employer is responsible for marketing and selling the final product. Fifth, payment is typically made on a piece rate basis and thus directly related to output. Sixth, labor for homework can be purchased in discrete or variable amounts and production usually involves skills that are generally available in the labor force, are easily learned, or are already possessed by potential homeworkers. Finally, most waged homeworkers, historically and in the present, are women and children (Dangler 1986, 258–59; 274, n.3).

Within the general category of waged homework we can distinguish between industrial homework and service homework. Industrial homework includes labor-intensive processes and assembly work in manufacturing industries. The industries known to employ homeworkers range from garment-making to automobiles to electronics. Service homework includes specialist typing, routine clerical work (much of which is now done via home computers), and packing and packaging (sorting, labeling, stapling, and sealing) (Allen 1983, 652).

Finally, the third type of home-based worker is the salaried professional who chooses to work at home from a position of strength on the labor market. A list of success stories presented in the magazine *Personal Computing* is typical of the popular press's lauding of experiments by professionals in home-based work. Eager to escape the daily stress of long commutes and traffic delays, suburban professionals such as a Louisville television producer/director and a Los Angeles moonlighter, who earns $10,000 a year as an administrative and communications freelancer, are spotlighted by the magazine as typical of a new breed of home-based worker (Schwartz 1987).

The terms on which the current debate over homework is being waged illustrate the importance of drawing the distinctions outlined above. Those who support the deregulation of homework in the United States on the basis of "personal freedom" and "entrepreneurship" portray homeworkers as a homogeneous group of people with equal chances for a lucrative and fulfilling work experience. The tendency to confound home-based clerical workers and salaried professionals who utilize new computer technologies into a single category—telecommuters—is a case in point. One of my primary objectives is to expose the fallacies that follow from indiscriminate analyses of home-based work. I distinguish between those types of home-based work arrangements

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whose expansion promises to worsen working conditions and lower living standards for workers and those which offer participants a more accommodating work experience. Similarly, recognizing that home-based work is not a single, homogeneous category is important for an understanding of the role of different forms of home-based work in global economic restructuring.

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