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The Household Meals Project: Feeding Power

A Dissertation Presented

by

Carol Shepherd Lindquist

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Sociology

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Abstract of the Dissertation

The Household Meals Project: Feeding Power

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The Household Meals Project (HMP) looks at the division of food-related chores (shopping, putting supplies away, food preparation, cleaning up, garbage, and recycling) in 150 middle-class households in suburban and urban New York. The mixed-methods study employs quantitative, qualitative and visual (photographic) data.

Issues focused on include: the micro-sociological dynamics of power and accommodation within households; how the praxis of household food chores serves as a distinct power base for women, and one that is transmitted inter-generationally as a vital component of female identity; how the cultural territory of domestic food practices serves as a site where social change is both produced and resisted, often simultaneously; and identification of several socio-historical trends in the U.S. over the last century which have acted to increase the gender imbalance in domestic food work, even as paid work and other domestic labor have moved toward gender equality. These issues all stem from a seemingly simple question: What factors lie behind the continuation of female responsibility for the majority of food-related chores in dual-headed households?

Among the findings: both women and men tend to see the praxis of food chores as a health-related, emotionally freighted vocational discipline—an unpaid job particularly geared toward women that engages the work ethic traditionally associated with paid employment—rather than as a neutral set of tasks that can be done equally well by anyone. In addition, a comparison of chore-specific data from a 1980s study with the HMP’s data reveals identifiable change in who does the work, while still maintaining female-dominated “ownership” of these responsibilities.

This work explores how the combination of personal expectations and experiences, larger social trends, and the physical setting of kitchens influence and shape the daily fulfillment of food-related responsibilities. Through this synthesis, it becomes clear that the food-related home environment—conscious, unconscious, physical, and symbolic—serves as a source of both social stability and instability as it reflects and generates social change. Far from a passive repository of private practices, household meals are seen to be a potent force in cultural, political, and economic life.

Dedicated to Lars and Brent, my rocks.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Household Meals Project (HMP) is a mixed-methods study that used a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods, including in-depth interviews, written questionnaires, photographs, and frequency calculations to examine the division of food-related chores. The aim was to gain insight into some of the ways in which the daily necessities of food provision affect people's behaviors, habits and identities. The study's overall purpose was to investigate some aspects of the ways that gender roles, expectations, and the balance of power in relationships are being negotiated and reshaped within households.

Although there are many facets of household labor, I chose to focus on food-related matters (planning, shopping, putting groceries away, producing meals, cleaning up, and handling garbage and recycling) because eating is a human constant—people do it every day, several times a day—while other chores, laundry and cleaning for instance, are usually not daily activities. Each day, more than two-thirds of Americans eat their main meal at home with others (Friedman 1994; Goodnow and Bowes 1994; Bell and Valentine 1997). With remarkable stability, this statistic has held constant since 1985 (Robinson and Godbey 1997), even as fundamental social institutions—the workplace and the family—have undergone profound changes. To enable such a decided preference for home-based eating and to sustain it as a reliable and stable part of their lives, people perform a great deal of direct and indirect food-related work as individuals and in partnership with others. Most important for a household, the sharing of time and work on meals is a crucial part of creating a family (DeVault 1991).

The division of responsibility among household members for food-related tasks, which reflects the dynamics and necessities of the interface between jobs and home, embodies a practical example of the ideology of social exchange within household routine. It illustrates inequalities, power relations between individuals, including the variety of layers and kinds of power in households, and it acts as a powerful mechanism through which social relations and divisions are symbolized, reinforced, and reproduced.

This is a profoundly gendered area of human activity—women are still largely held responsible for food-related matters—even though in a postmodern, industrial society there is no underlying physical advantage to having one gender rather than the other produce food—

each can equally well push a cart through a supermarket, find ingredients for a meal in the pantry and refrigerator and process them, or bring home prepared food. I have found that studying household patterns with regard to food chores provides an unusually clear field in which one may investigate details of the social production and reproduction of gender—identities, expectations, assumptions, relations, and roles—all elements of how gender is “done.” Unlike issues of childcare, which are often complicated by association with women’s unique childbearing capacity, there is no credible argument that one gender is more physiologically suited to carrying out food activities than the other (apart from breast-feeding, which is not universally practiced and is limited to a small segment of the human life course for both woman and child). So, it can be asserted that the gendered nature of responsibility for food chores is a “purely” social construction, and one that seems to endure through significant changes in other gendered social norms. Particularly germane to this inquiry is a finding in other research that food tasks have shown a lesser tendency than other domestic chores to move toward gender equality in terms of responsibility and commission (DeVault 1991; Warde 1997; McIntosh & Zey 1998; Coltrane 2000). The questions addressed here are: why this is so?; what might act to inhibit a more vigorous shift toward more equal sharing of food tasks?; is it an instance of desire met with resistance, or is there perhaps a more subtle interplay of conscious and subconscious factors that act together to create such a dilatory effect? These questions and the inquiry as a whole try to uncover some of the factors that are involved in keeping household food work as an extremely gendered pursuit. My speculation is that some positive element exists (or several of them) that defuses an impetus toward gender equality in such matters. This investigative perspective follows a call by Toni Calasanti and Ann Bailey (1991) to focus “...on the persistence of the gender difference in the division of domestic labor rather than on factors accounting for the small amount of change...,” which would, they argue, “...be more fruitful for understanding and eradicating inequality” (p.49).

A close examination of the balance of food chores within households also acts as a lens that permits exploration of the structure of necessity and habit that exists within each household, how that involves and affects individuals and relationships, and how the fund of power and expectation that is wielded by each household partner is apparent in the division and completion of these daily chores. How people decide and enact food-related behaviors

and routines within the household (and with each other) provide a cross-sectional view of the roles played by expectation and assumption, habit and tradition, rational choice and exchange of various capitals (material and cultural, for instance), necessity, and covert and overt power, competition, and accommodation, to name some important factors. Home and work are interdependent and interactive, and the dynamics of accommodation and conflict between personal and professional responsibilities—within the household as a whole, between the various household members, and for each individual—are often played out and highlighted through the daily necessities of domestic food concerns. In addition to considerations of available time and varying obligations, key factors also include relative amounts and kinds of individual power and capital, as well as individual preferences, roles, and assumptions, which often are shaped more by social norms and habit than by practical considerations of availability and need. As discussed later, changes in a household's food routines can reflect shifts in the job duties, time availability, health status, and presence or absence of household members. It is also important to assess why the balance of responsibility for food chores often remains the same, in many cases, despite the occurrence of one or more of the significant life changes just cited. In these instances, the decisive factors seem to be emotional rather than instrumental ones, although a practical rationale is often offered to justify the continuation of the *status quo*.

Analysis of the data collected by *The Household Meals Project* presents specific information about the distribution of responsibility and frequency of completion of food chores in participant households. Individuals' feelings about their experiences are also explored. Such a combination of data types enables a thorough and sensitive examination of the issues involved and the pressures that are felt in various households and by household members.

Another aspect of this research quite literally looks at the kitchens in which the daily food chores took place. This was accomplished through a series of photos of kitchens and food storage spaces from consenting participant households. While the collection of photographs is a huge and rich source of data that can be mined for years to come, its particular value in this inquiry is to provide visual reference for the environmental circumstances in which household food practices occur. In other words, the kitchen, which metaphorically serves as the heart of a home, can be seen to reflect its household's internal

configurations of power, status, and gender in a spatial dimension. A social-historical analysis of a portion of the *HMP* photos reveals some of the external economic and political influences that are embedded in the three-dimensional fabric of these kitchens. This aspect of the study builds on Soja's idea of "spatiality," or socially produced and influential space as "...an active area where purposeful human agency jostles problematically with tendential social determinations to shape everyday activity [and] particularize social change" (1985:90).

Finally, an across-the-decades comparison of shared versus solo effort on three specific chores is performed. By comparing data from a 1980s study by Dana Hiller and William Philliber (1986) with identical data from *The Household Meals Project*, a trajectory of change can be plotted, showing differences over time in the allocation of food tasks by gender and how much of the effort is shared between multiple people or is always done by one person.

ISSUES UNDER CONSIDERATION

Although it has been well documented that women do the preponderance of domestic chores and especially food-related tasks, irrespective of their employment status (Hochschild and Machung 1989; Tichenor 1999), and that working women do even more when their male partners are unemployed or partially employed (Brines 1994; Nock 1998), there has been little detailed investigation of why this might be so. Theories abound: that women view these obligations as sources of authority and control they are unwilling to give up (Valadez and Clignet 1984); that women gain personal and social prestige through doing paid (or "men's") work, while men lose personal and social prestige through doing unpaid domestic (or "women's") work, so both men and women maneuver to avoid a loss of prestige that might reflect negatively on the household as a unit (Pagnini and Rindfuss 1993; Carrington 1999; Tichenor 1999); that women put greater emphasis on their domestic obligations than their professional ones, while men do the reverse, and both structure their time and effort accordingly (Moore 1995); or that women and men have widely varying standards for accomplishing domestic work that underlie the huge disparity in time spent on it (Valadez and Clignet 1984).

While it is logical to think that relative amounts of income have a great deal to do with which partner performs more food work at home than the other—with the higher-

earning partner doing fewer chores—this assumption has not been proven in previous research. In fact, Tichenor (1999) found responsibility for food tasks (and other unpaid domestic labor) to be highly correlated with gender rather than income. Among her interviews with 22 couples where all females out-earned their male partners by at least 1.5:1, in 13 households the women did more than two-thirds of the chores, while in the other nine households women did two-thirds to one-half of them (but only one actually reached the 50% mark). Interestingly, Carrington (1999) reports that among male same-sex households (without the complicating factor of differing gender socialization), the division of household responsibilities seems to correspond more with the dominance or personal power of one partner within the relationship than to an earnings ratio. Other work states that personality, relative competence, and cultural factors are crucial in determining the power structure of a family (Centers et al. 1971) and suggests that these elements may be especially relevant in terms of specific activities, such as food work. *HMP* data support this conclusion and further suggest that the paradigm of woman-centered expertise may have a great deal to do with the assignment or assumption of responsibility for food tasks. It becomes clear when examining these issues that the multi-layered competencies of food work produce a stable and entrenched source of power and prestige that particularly accrues to women. As achievement of gender parity in and access to other forms of high status (such as professional recognition and reward) are still contested and uncertain for women, it is logical to think that any traditional advantage might be yielded reluctantly, even though it may “worth” less than other forms of power.

The idea that the expertise underlying nutritional matters might serve as a female-oriented seat of power is not new. Unfortunately, it was proposed for decades as an argument against gender equality in other, more public areas of endeavor (Beecher 1841; Lewin 1943). For this reason, some feminist scholars have chosen to ignore the issue or to deny it altogether (Hayden 1978, 1981; Berk 1985). But I believe that there is a profoundly feminist perspective in the recognition of tangible forms of power and authority, skills, and respect that have traditionally been held by women and are still important in everyday life, both for individuals and for households. Acknowledgement of these factors does not minimize the need to achieve gender equality in the workplace, wages, and other areas in which women continue to struggle. Nor does it minimize the amount of repetitious drudgery

that is involved in producing meals, cleaning afterward, and stocking and resupplying a household. One might even wonder if women have held onto the power found in domestic matters for so long in large part because it is unpaid and involves a great deal of mindless work that seems distasteful or thankless to others. But it is clear from my respondents' remarks that matters involving household food and nutrition form the basis for a competency, a professionalized discipline, an imperative for completion, and a vital aspect of identity that are specifically held and wielded by women. Equally clear is the fact that men largely neither share these perspectives nor hold them as personal capital. While both women and men can and do perform the chores of feeding a household, for many women the process includes an enactment of female identity and an expertise that directly affects the maintenance of health and cultural heritage. Further, many women have been trained from early childhood in the methods and necessities of food work and taught that this is a gendered discipline and theirs by right, while men have not. As is detailed in the following chapters, this early training of girls, but not boys, in the ways of food continues today.

BACKGROUND

Previous work that underlies and informs this investigation includes studies that explore the realities of household work (DeVault 1991; Goodnow and Bowes 1994; Hochschild and Machung 1989; Hochschild 1997; Carrington 1999), examine the highly gendered division of household labor (Hertz 1986; Brines 1994; South and Spitze 1994; Gould 1997; Robinson and Godbey 1997; Coltrane 1989, 2000), and analyze the reciprocal impacts of household work and employment as well as the functions in household social dynamics and changes in traditional roles that have recently taken place in multi-earner settings (Gerstel and Gross 1987; Goldscheider and Waite 1991; Rosenfield 1992; Nippert-Eng 1996; Parasuraman and Greenhaus 1997). In addition, some studies include household food practices and preferences as part of the greater social context of food choice, consumption, and interaction (Wood 1995; Beardsworth and Keil 1997; Bell and Valentine 1997), and as an arena for cultural reproduction (Bourdieu 1984).

It is apparent from this body of work that the current social trends that have changed the gender composition of the workplace have also had a profound effect on the homeplace. However, these trends reveal a striking disparity: although women are working and bringing

home the bacon in ever-increasing numbers and amounts (Hochschild and Machung 1989; Coltrane 2000), they are still largely responsible for the unpaid work of cooking it (and all other food-related chores). There has been some movement toward increased male participation in these activities, but not as much as might be expected. And there has been much scholarly speculation as to why this might be so—in arguments that range from the resource-obligation perspective (in which partners' respective levels of earnings determine how responsibility for chores is divided) (Becker 1981), to time availability theory (in which levels of partners' housework duties are inversely related to their ratio of "free" time to time spent on paid work—those who work more get to do less at home), to socialization and gender role attitudes (in which household members take on various kinds and amounts of housework according to learned and "appropriate" gender behavior) (Berk 1985; Tichenor 1999), to individual and group identity maintenance (DeVault 1991), and the construction and maintenance of the household unit as part of a social network (Bourdieu 1990). Many of these perspectives emerged in the responses from *HMP* participants, and differing combinations were in concurrent use as people explained how they negotiated and lived in their personal situations. In virtually all households, there seemed to be no single perspective from which one could understand the social landscape of food chores and responsibilities. Instead, there were many facets of necessity and convention that affected how the individuals and the household as a group "did" both gender and food, often simultaneously.

From the sparse evidence gleaned from other studies conducted with partners in traditional female-male relationships, men tended to approach food-related activity as a personal achievement, an expression of self, or a gift to others, rather than as fulfillment of a "morally charged ideal of deferential service" (DeVault 1991) as many women did. And instead of a social and interactive activity—an "ordeal of conviviality" (Valadez and Clignet 1984)—women's approach to food chores appeared to be an internally generated obligation (based on their gender socialization) that naturalized the work and rendered the constant expenditure of effort invisible—an "ordeal of civility" (Valadez and Clignet 1984). This approach tied into the perception that provision of tasty and healthful food was part of the caregiving often defined as "women's work." Male food work mostly seemed to stand on its own as a pleasurable accomplishment or as intermittent assistance for the person who held primary responsibility (Coltrane 2000; Hollows 2003; Greenstein 1996; Harnack et al. 1998).

The preponderance of studies that looked at intermural food activities within American or British households (Charles and Kerr 1988; DeVault 1991; Hiller and Philliber 1986; South and Spitze 1994; Harnack et al. 1998) were in their data-gathering phase during the 1980s or early 1990s. All but one based their assessments of male involvement in food-related activities primarily on interviews with women, not with both women and men. Hiller and Philliber (1986) interviewed both wives and husbands, but they focused on only half of the equation: who did the work, leaving aside the issue of who did not do it. As is made clear in later chapters, the lack of involvement is an important factor and one that is well-considered in the current work.

The Household Meals Project's aim was to hear what people had to say about the division of food chores in their households and to find out their feelings and opinions on the obvious and not-so-obvious factors involved. To do this, it was necessary to gain a dual-gender perspective on these issues from both female and male respondents, which was accomplished with a pool of respondents consisting of 132 women and 26 men. In addition, the *HMP* examined the dynamics that fuel the daily enactment of food-based domestic work from the perspective of the political and emotional economies of household routine and interactions. This approach was substantially different than that taken by DeVault (1991), who focused on individual practices of the “unpaid work of caring for others,” or Charles and Kerr (1988), whose interviews provided a comparative ethnographic profile of household food practices among families with young children across various social classes in Britain.

CHAPTERS

The content of *The Household Meals Project* is set forth in the following chapters:

Chapter Two: Methods and Procedures: This chapter provides information about the various methods used in all aspects of the study: to gather data, to process them and to perform the analyses. Details are given of interview guide and questionnaire development, participant recruitment and selection, and procedures followed during the study's data collection phase. Particular attention is given to the lengthy processing of the raw data into an analyzable form, as this was an especially challenging aspect of the research. I hope that others who face similar challenges may find some useful information in these specifics.

Chapter Three: Quantitative Evidence from Interviews & Questionnaires: Details of demographic information about *HMP* respondents are given here. Most of the chapter presents the results of frequency calculations that were compiled from a content analysis of the study's spoken and written evidence. Information about how often respondents engaged in specific food chores is presented on a seven-point scale and broken out by gender. In order to obtain the clearest possible view of how gender is implicated in these matters, frequencies for each chore are given twice: first, including data from all households; and second, using data only from dual-gender households.

Chapter Four: Qualitative Evidence from Interviews & Questionnaires: Using quotes from *HMP* respondents' responses to the interviews and questionnaires, this chapter presents the themes and issues that emerged during extensive content analysis. The material is organized by chore type, and each section correlates the frequency expressions from Chapter Two with the qualitative information for each task. In addition, a section on identity appears at the chapter's end.

Chapter Five: Kitchens: The Heart of the Household: This chapter takes the physical space of the contemporary kitchen—the central location for most food chores—and “reads” it to discover another dimension of social and political influences that have shaped household food practices. Images from the *HMP*'s extensive collection of visual data illustrate and illuminate the chapter's main points.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Analysis: The variety of ideas and evidence presented in Chapters Three, Four and Five are considered as a whole. The *HMP*'s empirical findings are analyzed from several theoretical viewpoints, which yields a robust synthesis of evidence and argument.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion: The study's evidence and arguments are reviewed and summarized. The chapter also outlines ideas for further analysis of the *HMP*'s data and identifies opportunities for further research.

Chapter 2

Methods and Procedures

The Household Meals Project was performed as a multi-method, qualitative study, and the findings in this report are based on 14 in-depth ethnographic interviews, 141 written questionnaires, and some of the photographs from 150 participant households. The use of mixed methods for data collection made it necessary to employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative analytic procedures to sort and interpret the information that had been gathered. This multi-faceted approach is one of the study's strengths. As is detailed in subsequent chapters, it is evident that the use of a variety of qualitative techniques and methods to obtain the raw material and a combination of qualitative and some quantitative means to analyze the data facilitated a more thorough approach to the study's research questions than could have been possible through the use of a single, specialized method of collection and analysis. The effectiveness of methodological "triangulation" (employing a carefully planned, eclectic array of methods) to assemble and examine the multi-layered evidence in domestic and relationship-based sociological phenomena is recommended by Gregory (1995), LeCompte and Schensul (1999), and Emmison and Smith (2000) from their research experiences. Each method—ethnography, grounded theory, and documentary photography—has strengths, complements the others, and provides an added measure of reliability and validity. The result is a notably robust framework of evidence, analysis, and interpretation, which is especially desirable in qualitative work.

While this multi-faceted approach undoubtedly took much longer to complete than a simpler analysis would have, it helped in tackling the many issues that were salient to the research but difficult to elucidate. While the research focus was clearly identified—to investigate the division of responsibility for domestic food chores in dual-headed households—the underlying questions of gender, power, utility, individual responsibility and preference, cultural norms, and relationship or household dynamics were exceptionally tangled. Unraveling these factors was essential, as my goal was to come to a greater understanding of the connections and interplay between these issues and their effects on respondents' lives. From the beginning, it was apparent that some factors—such as gender and utility (e.g. time availability and wage-earning disparities)—would be more important than others overall, and that various factors, such as cultural norms, were likely to prevail

with greater emphasis and influence in differing households. The specifics, however, were unclear at the start of the research, and it seemed that only the data would provide sufficient evidence to unravel and pursue these logical threads. Therefore, an analytical technique based on the principles of grounded theory was employed. In this approach, the data are reviewed and combed for thematic ideas, comments, and problems as they are gathered. This information is then used to focus further investigation. The process involves a kind of ongoing evolution of emphasis on the specific issues that underlie and inform the study's research questions.

A clear example of the efficacy of this grounded-theory technique can be seen in the emergent understanding that—particularly in households that had had a traditionally gendered assignment of responsibility for food chores—the advent of chronic illness in the female partner tended to spur a lasting change to a more equal division of labor between the two partners (even when the woman's illness was dormant and she lived, for all intents and purposes, a normal life), whereas episodic illness (acute but curable) caused only a temporary shift in responsibilities. At the beginning of the research, it was not clear what effect, if any, might be seen from one partner's illness. Health issues were inquired about, but mostly in regard to nutritional considerations. Only after a few interviews were conducted did it become apparent that the experience of chronic illness was particularly important in effecting noticeable change in the distribution and shifting of responsibility for food chores.

STUDY PARTICIPANTS: SPECIFICATIONS AND ELIGIBILITY

The household was the *HMP*'s unit of analysis, and data from 150 of them are considered in this report. Most of these households were located in the New York metropolitan area—90 in suburban areas (in communities on Long Island, in New Jersey, and north of New York City) and 57 in New York City—while three were in other states (Georgia, Missouri, and Washington). In order to focus on the interactions between adult household members, the study included only those households with at least two adults who agreed that they had a significant, long-term relationship of more than two years in duration. Only households founded on both affective—or romantic—partnerships and filial relationships were included. Of these households, 119 were based on affective partnerships,

29 were filial (a parent and an adult child), one household was headed by two adult siblings, and another consisted of a trio of adult cousins.

The *HMP* included 20 households that were formed around same-sex relationships: three affective (romantic) and 17 filial; as well as 130 that were based on dual-sex relationships: 116 affective and 14 filial. It should be noted that 16 filial same-sex households and 13 filial dual-sex households were classified in the analysis as single-parent households, even though the foundational relationships were between parents and their adult children (over age 18). In terms of how these households operated, the parent-child dynamic was quite evident. The remaining singletons (one filial same-sex household and one filial dual-sex household) respectively consisted of a trio of adult male cousins and an adult brother and sister who cared for their ailing father. This information is also presented in “Table 1: Household Configurations.”

Households of non-kin roommates and single parents with only minor children were not eligible for the study. The former tended to lack the underlying emotional bond that was essential to this inquiry, and the latter households were not based on a relationship between two adults.

The existence of an emotional bond between the adults in a household was crucial to the investigation. In designing the study, I suspected that the existence of an emotionally charged tie between adults who lived together would increase the likelihood of some degree of mutual dependency and sometimes-conflicting, unspoken expectations and assumptions about who did what domestic chores, while at the same time it presented logistical options regarding the division or assignment of food-related labor. The idea was that relationships with an emotional component tend to involve sometimes-irrational role norms (unwritten expectations and assumptions about what one wants and will do) on both sides, whereas non-emotional relationships—roommates, for example—are more apt to be negotiated with fairness as a goal. I was more interested in the “unfair” aspects of household behavior, so emotionally based households were necessary to my inquiry.

Another important premise of this study was that much gender-specific behavior is socially and interactively constructed and carried out (Carrington 1999; Cline 1990; Kimmel and Messner [1989] 2001); and that “female” and “male” roles have more to do with relative amounts of power, expectation, and accepted identity within relationships than they do with

physical sexual characteristics. As Berk (1985) argues, “in households where the appropriation of *another’s* work is possible, in practice the expression of work and the expression of gender become inseparable” (p.205), with the clear implication that gender issues are deeply embedded in domestic food practices. Some greater tendency toward discussion and egalitarian effort was noted in the *HMP’s* same-sex households, as it had been in previous research: Cline (1990) found it to be more common among lesbian couples to conscientiously negotiate domestic arrangements than among heterosexual couples.

Although the presence of children or minors significantly increases the amount of food-related work that is performed in a household (Cline 1990; Nock 1998), I believed that their presence or absence would not be crucial to the differences between households in the areas under investigation. Goldscheider and Waite (1991) found that the presence of small children in a household increased the intensity of the traditional female role, but their absence did not erase gender divisions or roles. An interesting observation in the *HMP’s* households was a tendency for a traditionally gendered allocation of food chores to stay in place after grown children had moved on to live elsewhere, even though the parents remembered having had a greater equality of responsibility before the children were born. This finding and its implications are discussed further in Chapters Three and Five. In the interviews and questionnaires, I inquired if each household included children or teenagers, of what ages, and what role(s) they played—if any—in the completion of food chores. But the presence or absence of children was not used to determine eligibility for participation in the study. The distribution of participant households with minors was as follows: 64 households, or 43% of the total households, had members under age 18. Of these, 49 households had only older children, ages 10-17, while 15 households included children under the age of 10. However, in a clear majority of participant households (57%), all residents were adults (18 years or older).

It is likely that the inclusion of households based on non-traditional relationships and those without children has considerably strengthened the general relevance of this research and its conclusions. Most previous studies on household work and food practices have focused tightly on people who were married or in exclusively heterosexual significant relationships—thus eliminating households headed by same-sex partners or closely related adults (DeVault 1991; Hertz 1986; Nippert-Eng 1996; South and Spitze 1994)—or on

families with young children—thus eliminating households with older children or no children (Charles and Kerr 1988). Yet, in reality, American families and households are highly varied in composition. Recent data show that only 10% of U.S. households are “traditional” families with young children, headed by a breadwinner husband and a homemaker wife (Parasuraman and Greenhaus 1997), and less than half (46%) of employed people are parents (“National Study of the Changing Workforce” [NCSW] 1997). So, it seemed that concentrating only on dual-headed households with children would have skewed my study’s findings, since not only are such households a minority of overall households, but also they tend to be the most insular and inclined to follow traditional patterns of the gendered division of household labor (Cline 1990; Nock 1998). In addition, a tight focus on a particular household configuration would have partially missed the wider range of relationships, power balances, and negotiations between household members, plus the give-and-take between internal household matters and outside pressures and necessities that were evident from a greater variety of household profiles.

Another point of difference from previous studies was the aim to achieve a significant proportion of interviews with *both* adult heads of participant households, rather than just one. This goal was reached, for the most part, as five of the nine interview households provided conversations with both adult partners. Both partners in two other interview households also were willing to participate, but this did not occur due to the advent of my own catastrophic health events, which stopped the interviewing process in its tracks. Only two interview households actually stated a preference that only one adult partner should be interviewed. This was remarkable, as the most-similar previous study had achieved only a 10% dual-partner-participation rate (DeVault 1991). The final tally of *HMP* interviews was 10 double-partner interviews in five households, and four single-partner interviews in four households, which amounts to a 56% completion rate for interviews with both heads of respondent households.

THE INTERVIEWS

From the outset of this research, it was clear that the information on personal experiences and feelings that I sought could not be extracted from time diaries or quantitative data on the division of household labor, and that in-depth conversations were needed to

investigate these circumstances in detail. Each interview lasted for three or more hours and covered a variety of topics. I prepared and used a lengthy interview guide to help keep the conversations on track; but it was also important that the respondents should volunteer and pursue topics or issues that were important to them. Only from freely expressed feelings and ideas would I learn what I sought: how each person experienced and felt about the dynamics and realities of food production in her or his household.

As discussed previously, the initial collection of *HMP* data was obtained through 14 in-depth interviews with respondents from nine households in western Suffolk County. The interviews took place from March through May, 2002, and the respondents included 11 women and three men: comprising three dual-gender couples, one same-sex couple, two female-headed, single-parent households—in one I interviewed the household head and another adult female, while in the other only the household head was interviewed—and three female partners in dual-gender households. As mentioned, in two of these last households, the male partners were willing to be interviewed, and appointments had been scheduled with them, but my cancer diagnosis intervened.

These participants were found through descriptive flyers that were posted in libraries, grocery stores, bagel shops, hardware stores, and laundromats in a variety of prosperous and less-prosperous neighborhoods, as well as the laundry rooms of graduate student housing at a local university. (Although they all have prominently placed bulletin boards, two Starbucks coffee shops refused permission for the flyers to be posted. A Starbucks bulletin board is not a place for public notices to the community, a store manager explained, but it is reserved exclusively for corporate pitches.) In addition, an announcement was distributed through the email listserv of a local Unitarian fellowship. The flyers outlined this study and its requirements for participation, offered \$30 per completed interview (which was paid from my personal finances), and included a fringe of tear-off strips providing both a phone number and an email address for interested people to contact. Both libraries and bookstores generated a higher response rate than supermarkets, delis, and bagel shops, despite the obvious food connection of the latter few. Laundromats had the highest rate of responses from those who were ineligible—people whose households were not based on long-term relationships—even though that requirement was clearly stated on the flyer. I attempted to get further respondents from chain referrals and snowball sampling as the interviews

proceeded, but this was, surprisingly, unsuccessful. While the people from these referrals were receptive when I talked to them, the length of the prospective interview—three hours, sometimes longer—was an inhibiting factor; they just didn't have the time. (The interview length was stated on the flyer and in the email posting, so it is probable that only those who knew they would have the time made the initial call.) Without a doubt, the *HMP*'s most effective recruitment tool was the flyer. One would-be participant actually chased me down the street with a tear-off strip in her hand immediately after the flyer had been tacked to a library bulletin board.

The email posting to the Unitarian fellowship was worded similarly to the flyer. It, too, received a good response; two of the 14 interview respondents came from this source. There were some obvious limitations to the results from this posting—it was seen only by those who were Unitarians, used computers, and were signed up for the fellowship's listserv—all of which produced a degree of bias among potential respondents.

When they called or emailed, interested people were asked a few questions about their household composition. If their responses fulfilled the eligibility requirements detailed previously, then an appointment for an interview was discussed. Some withdrew at this point, unable to find a stretch of three-plus hours for the conversation. Those who did commit the time were asked if they preferred to talk at home (this was my own preference, as I wanted to see and be in the environment where the activities discussed actually took place) or at another location. Almost all of the respondents chose to be interviewed at home; one interview started in the respondent's office, but we shifted locations to his home when the time came for his children to return from school. All but one of the conversations were completed in a single session, and that sole interview was finished in a second meeting during the same week (the first session occurred in the respondent's home, and we met at a local diner for the second part).

The ideal circumstance for an interview was that it should take place at a time when the other partner was absent in order to ensure each participant's privacy and that the information would be undiluted by internal political considerations. While it would have been more economical in terms of time and effort to interview household members together, this was thought likely to result in a loss of crucial material regarding differences of experience, opinion, and feeling between partners—all key points of inquiry. Carrington

(1999) and Hochschild and Machung (1989) found that, when interviewed separately, partners often gave startlingly contradictory accounts of household life and events. Whereas, when interviewed together, they tended to produce “seamless” accounts (Aquilino 1993) of household activity, most importantly, the myth of equal labor (Carrington 1999; Hochschild and Machung 1989) or, as Bittman and Pixley (1997) have named it, “pseudomutuality.” So, in each case, I mentioned beforehand that privacy during the interview would be desirable. This was achieved in 11 of the interviews. In two of these instances, the non-interviewing partner was present when I arrived, but she/he left shortly afterward. In four interviews, however, either the other partner or additional household members were present through most or all of each interview. Notably, this occurred in the three lowest-income interview households. Part of the situation was that the dwellings themselves were small—true physical and audio separation were difficult to achieve. The interview tended to take place in the kitchen, which was not only an apt location but also a comfortable place to talk to a stranger for some hours. But, as they were centrally located, the kitchens were not private. Nor was it likely or even feasible for extra people to go elsewhere while the interview took place. For some, transportation was an issue because the respondent was the household’s principal driver. For others, it was a question of where to go for the duration of the interview—a limited budget offered few options that matched the comfort and convenience of home. This became apparent during the first few minutes of conversation, and, rather than insisting that extra people would be excessive, I adapted and, in some cases, observed more than would have been possible in their absence.

In one instance, the interviewee’s elderly parents also sat at the kitchen table during the interview and became increasingly involved and vocal as the conversation went on. This was, in itself, interesting, as there were interchanges between the family members that provided immediate examples of some of the conflicts mentioned by the subject. In another example, the non-interviewing partner was within earshot during both interviews in that household, and interjections were offered—some useful, some distracting. Despite these unplanned circumstances, I felt that the interviews were productive; that differing feelings, points of view, and experiences were articulated—sometimes distinctly, sometimes subtly—in ways that helped my investigation. As mentioned, these events also provided an up-close look at some of the relationship dynamics in action, which would not have been observable

otherwise. It was notable that the most telling examples of differences and open conflict between household members occurred late in my visits, once the conversation had been going on for a while, when I was no longer a total stranger, and people had relaxed somewhat.

For the interviews, I felt that my presentation of self (Goffman 1959) was an important factor. Because the intent was to probe into relationship dynamics and issues as they were manifested in daily food chores, I wanted respondents to be as comfortable and, therefore, as candid as possible. Part of this ease hinged on their perception of me as a “friendly” researcher, rather than an ivory-tower investigator. So I dressed carefully: somewhat conservatively, but neither luxuriously nor in jeans; in casual workday clothing, rather than professional or grad-student gear. The supplies that were needed for the interview—a small digital recorder, a digital camera, pens, throat-soothing mints, and a pad of sticky notes—were carried in a small, shallow, plastic basket. A translucent plastic accordion folder held the interview guide, consent forms, and a pad of lined paper. Everything was deliberately made visible and easy to identify.

Each interview began with the presentation of CORIHS-approved consent forms that were read and signed, then a spoken declaration of confidentiality from me gave assurance that one partner’s comments would not be cited or quoted in the other partner’s interview. Except in one instance, respondents offered me something to drink and/or eat, which I always accepted.

The conversation started with a short list of questions about the demographic characteristics of each household and its members (age, gender, work or school, days/hours worked, annual income, distance from work to home, religion, birthplace, growing-up region, and citizenship status), plus information about each person’s favorite and least favorite foods, and individual dietary preferences and restrictions. These data provided a demographic framework for the context of the interviews, as well as some relevant background information. Although it has been recommended that it is better to obtain demographic information at the end of an interview—that diving right into a conversation about the subject of inquiry is more productive and builds a better research relationship (i.e. less-oriented to the hierarchy of interviewer-and-subject) (Chicchi 2000), I found it more useful to discuss the demographics first. Getting this information gave me a quick tutorial about who lived in

the household and their relationships, as well as relevant biographical facts; and the respondents seemed glad to provide the information. Inclusion of dietary necessities and tastes in this section oriented the inquiry toward food practices and kept each person's preferences and experiences distinct.

Throughout these conversations, I relied on the extensive interview guide to serve as a reminder of the important subjects to be discussed. Prior to its use in the *HMP* conversations, the interview guide was refined in three lengthy test-interviews and several informal focus groups that helped me to ascertain what concerns were prevalent in these subject areas. I was aiming to obtain densely detailed information about the details, subtleties, and the sometimes contradictory personal experiences of various household members as well as the extensive networks of action and interaction within households. The early test runs gave me a good measure of confidence in the construct validity of the guide and the internal validity of the study's foci. As previously outlined, the questions and probes were gauged to provide a depth of understanding of the negotiation and renegotiation surrounding food provision and the associated responsibilities that take place in relationships, how these circumstances and activities impact the home-work interface and where each materially affects the other, as well as the changes in individual and family life circumstances that affect collective activities such as household food chores and meals. Information was also sought about the epiphanies and changed circumstances within relationships that often provide an impetus and focal point for shifts in assignment of household food responsibilities.

While it was not a script, the interview guide included the topics to cover, points to probe for, and reminders for me to ask about things that might have been overlooked or sidetracked as the conversation proceeded. Information was sought on seven concrete aspects of domestic food chores: planning; shopping; putting groceries away; pulling meals together; cleaning up after cooking and meals; and handling garbage and recycling. Within these subject areas, the following topics and issues were covered:

- 1) the division of responsibility for food-related tasks among household members: what food routines are currently in place, how the responsibilities for food chores are allocated and how this division of labor was arrived at, and how food-related routines and responsibilities are established, enacted, maintained, broken, and changed;

- 2) individual preferences regarding such activity and how personal and group identity may be implicated in them;
- 3) the reciprocal effects of work and home on food-related matters: what impact the necessities of work have on household food chores and routines and vice versa;
- 4) the processes through which these matters are negotiated and what ways food-related responsibilities and habits may have shifted over the lifetime of the household;
- 5) the expectations and assumptions that underlie individuals' roles and relationships in the household, how comfortable each person is with her/his own experience, how others are perceived;
- 6) the circumstances surrounding instances of significant change in household food-related routines: what conflicts may arise around these issues, what factors may be inhibiting further or faster changes; and
- 7) what impact these matters may have on various household members, their internal and external relationships, and other responsibilities.

The *HMP* interview guide is included in this document as Appendix 1.

The conversations were recorded on an Olympus DM-1 digital voice recorder. Use of the digital device rather than a traditional tape recorder meant that there were no distracting stops in the flow of the conversation when a tape needed to be flipped or changed. Limiting interruptions was an important goal for such long interviews, because it kept both participants focused, the information flowing, and it lessened the total time needed to complete the interview.

After the interview—in most cases, immediately afterward in the privacy of my car—I recorded my own impressions, observations, and notes about interview or household circumstances that might not have been captured in the recorded interview or site photos. The collection of field notes enabled me to keep track of personal reactions and interactions that might have skewed or influenced both the interviews and my later interpretation of them. As a side note, this process also proved to be especially useful in helping me to decompress after particularly intense interviews.

In keeping with the principles of grounded theory, I began transcribing as soon as the first interview had been completed, working through it to gain more insight into what topics might merit further probing in subsequent ones (Strauss and Corbin 1990), and I intended to

do the same after each interview. It quickly became apparent that the transcription process would take much longer than anticipated. Even though I was an experienced transcriptionist, the time needed to transform the spoken conversation into written format occurred at a ratio of 5-6:1; five to six hours of transcription time were needed to process one hour of interview. It was obvious that a quicker method of initial analysis was necessary in order to gain meaningful insights and improvements for subsequent interviews, which were scheduled in close sequence. So I began listening to the completed interviews repeatedly, taking notes all the while, working to identify important topics and issues that had been openly discussed, those that were more subtly presented, and any that might have been skimmed or carefully avoided. This process yielded a number of insights that suggested additional lines of inquiry, including the influence of in-laws and extended family members on a household's food practices, the immense effect on responsibility-sharing of long-term, chronic illness in the partner who had habitually done most of the food chores, and the impact of emotional responses to missing family members (through divorce or other long-term absence) on food chores. Additionally, my note-taking served to begin the process of data coding, as it identified themes, categories, and subcategories in the information and highlighted the stories that were threaded through each respondent's remarks.

It must be noted that performing intensive analysis during ongoing research is not an easy process—some of the inherent stumbling blocks are: too much familiarity with the conversation, which is especially likely with a recent interview and can lead to auditory inattention and shallow interpretation; and genuine unfamiliarity with the issues presented by the respondent, which is mostly due to a lack of similar experience in the interviewer-analyst's own life, and can lead to a misapprehension of the importance of, connections to, and inferences from the subject at hand. To do this kind of analysis well requires time for reflection, brainstorming, and the sometimes-slow dawning of comprehension, and such processes often benefit from and are speeded by intensive conversations with colleagues who are familiar with the work. It is likely that the technique's advocates, Strauss and Corbin (1990), intended it to be used primarily in collaborative research, which would enable opportunities for fellow researchers to chew over the findings together. My experience is that a solo researcher has some difficulty in obtaining useful insights speedily. This certainly is one instance in which the combination of two or more researchers with their individual

funds of life and professional experience is, indeed, greater than the sum of its parts. Nevertheless, such on-the-fly intensive analysis is a useful technique, and its use with the *HMP* interviews was productive, as specified.

As the data were collected, all the information—interview, field notes, photos, transcription, data analysis notes, etc.—was stored on a CD, one per household. As further analysis was completed, the CDs were updated, and, unless being used, they were kept in locked storage. A coding scheme was implemented in which each interview was tagged with a mixed number-letter code that provided a unique identity but preserved anonymity. This coding scheme is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In the interest of full disclosure, it should be stated that, in May 2002, while deeply engaged in recruiting for and carrying out the interviews, I was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Unfortunately, the requisite year of harsh treatments effectively terminated the interview collection process, and another year-plus passed before I had recovered sufficiently to resume work. It quickly became obvious that permanent side effects from the cancer treatments had limited my physical capabilities and necessitated significant changes in the method of data collection.

With the approval of my advisor, Dr. Javier Auyero, I reworked the study's data acquisition strategy to take advantage of an undergraduate course I taught on the "Sociology of Intimate Relationships." A key topic on my syllabus was the division of domestic labor, and the class provided an unmatched opportunity to acquire additional data via my 221 students. With very few substantive changes, the *HMP* interview guide was adapted into a questionnaire that covered the subject-household's food practices, preferences, habits, changes over time, conflicts, and demographic data—all the material and issues that had been discussed in the interviews. As a course requirement and final project, each student was assigned to identify a household that fit the *HMP*'s eligibility parameters (at this stage in the assignment, I requested and approved a profile of each prospective household), to interview at least one adult household member to obtain the information sought, and to submit the completed questionnaire. Remarkably, only two students failed to complete the assignment, and most fulfilled the assignment quite well, so this expedient yielded a plethora of data.

With the addition of questionnaire-derived data, the total number of households in the *HMP*'s respondent pool reached 228. However, for this dissertation, I have opted to limit the

number of households included in my analysis to a total of 150. The information considered here comes from the nine interview households and 141 of the questionnaire households. The results of this study were not intended nor are they suited to be generalizable, but they can and do provide a clear and complex portrait of the household mechanisms and layers of interaction that are involved in food chores. A broad spectrum of information and tendencies may be derived from a sample size of 150 households. Previous qualitative studies in this area of inquiry have relied on significantly fewer sources (DeVault 1991; Charles and Kerr 1998; Berk 1985; Bittman and Pixley 1997; Cline 1990; Cobb 1999). Data from the remaining 78 households largely would be redundant to the details examined here. However, they can and will be included in further analysis and writing.

THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Because it was closely based on the interview guide, the *HMP* questionnaire covered the same subject areas and asked for the same information from respondents. Even the sequence of data-gathering was identical: demographic, food preference, and nutritional facts were sought first. Then respondents were led through a series of questions about the food-related chores that were specified previously: planning; food shopping; putting away groceries; assembling a meal; clearing and cleaning; garbage; and recycling. Because the guide had been intended for use as a reminder to myself of subjects to include during interviews, its original wording was somewhat sketchy. Since the questionnaire was aimed at respondents who would have to negotiate these items on their own, the questions needed to be reworded in order to facilitate easy comprehension, to be more personal in tone, and to cover the many aspects of each topic. This was done, and space was added to permit responses or notes to be written for each question. The once-streamlined interview guide burgeoned to a 19-page document with 139 questions, which can be found as Appendix 2 in this report.

Some repetition was unavoidable, as I wanted to learn similar things about each of the distinct, food-related chores: how household members felt about each one; whose responsibility they were; who mostly did them; who helped; if there was any conflict connected to each chore; if the assignment of responsibility had shifted over the duration of the household; if so, why; had this caused any disagreement; and so on. Each point of

information had to be asked about specifically. Not asking these questions directly, or hoping that respondents would remember the details that had been sought in a previous subject, and that they might then automatically provide them for all subjects, were not viable options. I wanted the document to stand on its own, to clearly and thoroughly state its inquiries and fulfill its mission. So I spent some time on varying the wording of the questions to minimize respondent burden, wishing to avoid boredom and possible inattention in respondents. Even so, there were a few complaints that the questions were repetitious, and some people obviously skimmed through the material and provided minimal or no answers. But a large majority of the questionnaire respondents worked carefully through the many pages and provided a wealth of details.

As noted in previous survey research (Tulving and Schacter 1990), priming, or asking a series of variously worded queries about a particular subject, is useful when employed as a deliberate research strategy. Responses to the *HMP* questionnaire bore this out, as answers to a series of questions on the same subject often provided additional information, added depth to the responses, and, in some instances, revealed contradictions, a variety of feelings and thoughts, even, at times, the existence of previously unmentioned conflict. Without such deliberate plumbing of the topics under investigation, it is unlikely that these details would have emerged. This technique echoes a common occurrence in spoken conversation: when a question is asked, the respondent will reply; if the subject is revisited somewhat later and with different wording, additional information and more details may emerge. The first response was not necessarily deliberately truncated by the respondent, instead it was likely that the initial question triggered thought and memory cascades, so the next time the subject was raised, further ideas and experiences were ready to be communicated.

As mentioned, the questionnaires provided information on 218 additional households. These data were gathered in November and December, 2004. Details enumerated here are limited to the 141 questionnaire households included in the current analysis. The questionnaire requested information about individual points of view from various household members, when possible. So, in many instances, a household's responses to the questions came from multiple people, as more than one household member took part in the interview. In some of the completed questionnaires, multiple responses were intermittent, as not all participants replied to every question. In others, all pertinent questions had a variety of

responses; some households had obviously gone through the interview together as a family activity and provided comments from adults and younger members alike. A few even enjoyed it: “This was fun and enjoyable for everyone...” wrote one respondent; and, for another, answering the questionnaire proved to be a “...good family exercise.”

Although many perspectives appeared, overall, in the responses to the questionnaire, each household designated a principal respondent (and four households had two principal respondents) who supplied most of the information, with frequent input from other household members.

Table 1: Principal Respondents (PRs) by Gender

	Interview Households	Questionnaire Households	Totals	Totals by Percent
Female PRs	11	116	127	82.5%
Male PRs	3	23	26	16.9%
Gender unknown	0	1	1	0.7%
Total PRs	14	140	154	100.1*%

* Greater than 100% due to rounding,

Of the principal respondents for the questionnaires, 116 (83%) were female, and 23 (16%) were male, while the gender of one was unknown. Although, in practical terms, any adult could have been the principal respondent for her/his household, the fact that a huge majority were female reflects the fact that most of the people who have primary responsibility for food chores are women (Taylor and Spencer 1989). Of the four households with two principal respondents, three pairs were mixed-sex, and one pair was all-female. The involvement of women as co-principal respondents for these households further diluted men’s solo participation, as 13% of their already-small number were part of such teams; of course, this also slightly diluted the effect of women’s participation as principal respondents, but not significantly.

The *HMP*’s 141 questionnaire households provided a pool of 254 adults who were identified as principal householders or the head(s) of their household. (As previously detailed, while some *HMP* households rested on a relationship between a parent and an adult child, these were classified as single-parent households with one principal householder.) Of the principal householders (PHs), 138 (54%) were women, and 116 (46%) were men.

Table 2: Principal Householders (PHs) by Gender

	Interview Households	Questionnaire Households	Totals	Totals by Percent
Female PHs	11	138	149	55.0%
Male PHs	6	116	122	45.0%
Total PHs	17	254	271	100.0%

In sum, the numbers of principal householders, by gender, from both interview and questionnaire households constituted 149 women (55.0% of all PHs) and 122 men (45.0%); together, they totaled 271 individuals.

The 254 respondents in questionnaire households comprised 112 dual-gender couples (including a pair of siblings), two same-sex couples (both female), 23 single-mother households, four single-father households, and one trio of male cousins.

Table 3: Household Configurations

	Interview Households	Questionnaire Households	Totals	Totals by Percent
Dual-gender couples	6	110	116	78.0%
Dual-gender sibs	0	1	1	0.7%
Same-sex couples	1	2	3	2.0%
Same-sex cousins	0	1	1	0.7%
Single-mother	2	23	25	16.0%
Single-father	0	4	4	2.6%
Total Households	9	141	150	100.0%

As detailed previously, the mix of configurations among the interview households was much simpler: six were dual-gender affective households, two were single-mother households, and one was a same-sex affective household.

When considered in combination, the configuration of the *HMP*'s households was clearly weighted toward dual-gender couples, who were over three-fourths of the total. The next most frequent were female-headed, or single-mother, households, which comprised 16%, followed distantly by single-father households and same-sex couples at almost 3% and 2%, respectively. The dominance of dual-gender couples in the respondent pool may, in part, be due to the preponderance of households that were located in the suburbs, which are more heavily populated by families than are urban areas. Another factor is certainly the acquisition of a large amount of data via college students, who undoubtedly tended to profile traditional families rather than searching for households with non-traditional configurations.

While I approved the students' respondent households before any data were gathered, I did not attempt to impose a balance on the types of households that were investigated.

LIMITATIONS AND POTENTIAL FOR BIAS

As mentioned, participation in this study required a significant investment of time and reflexive candor from its respondents, especially in the interviews. Lack of time or interest necessarily eliminated many potential interview subjects and rendered a truly random selection process unfeasible. Although efforts were made in the selection process to achieve a wide base of subjects, the obvious self-selection of respondents undoubtedly caused some bias in the interview data.

In addition, the frequency of participants who were in some way connected with a university or college was notable: half of the interview respondents were either currently or formerly employed by Stony Brook University, graduate students, or family members of university-associated people. All questionnaire respondents came through university contacts, although not all households surveyed included students or other academic affiliates.

Most notices seeking interview participants were posted in the community rather than on academic premises, but, due to CORIHS requirements, the flyer and email posting stated that this study was for a dissertation. Quite a few respondents said that they wanted to participate because of that—it seemed to engender some sympathetic interest, and it's likely that the wording might have appealed more to academically inclined people than to others. I did not intend to focus on university-connected households, and it must be noted that their preponderance might weight the study's findings toward attitudes and domestic practices that tend to be found among people with higher education and income levels, which have been found to be somewhat different than those among the general populace (Taylor and Spencer 1989). At the same time, tapping into the university community allowed me to gain access to people from a multiplicity of ethnic and religious backgrounds, thereby providing a variety of perspectives and traditions and deepening the field of available data.

THE PHOTOS

To provide a visual dimension to the reality of the households studied, photographs were taken (with written permission) of respondents' kitchens, including both external and

internal shots of refrigerators, pantries, and other food storage spaces; the surfaces of tables and other furnishings, floors and walls; and doors, windows, and corridors. Also photographed were appliances, the contents of drawers and china or dish cabinets, pet feeding areas, garbage cans, recycling collections, grocery lists, and any other notable items. Although I expected to find other collections of kitchen photos among previous research into household food practices or contemporary living quarters, none emerged. Some investigators had made a few snapshots during the course of their work (most notably, Carrington 1999), but none had followed a systematic procedure that documented the visual minutiae of daily life in scores of household kitchens, as was done in the *Household Meals Project*. So startling is the lack of previous work in this regard that the complete collection of *HMP* photographs has been requested by the Schlesinger Library at Harvard as an addition to the archives of its culinary collection, upon completion of this current work. A subsequent book is planned to analyze the photos in greater depth than is feasible here.

Altogether, 158 of my respondent households consented to have their kitchens photographed, including the nine interview households, while 60 questionnaire households did not. Of the 150 households that are included in this writing, 113 permitted photos to be taken, and 37 preferred to skip the photo shoot. Two sets of photos were unusable—one because no signed consent form was submitted, while photos from the other were too blurry. Most of the photo sets were extensive, many with up to 80 shots per household; just a few were minimal. Along with the photos from the interview households, there are literally thousands of photos in the *HMP*'s collection of kitchens.

I took the pictures in the interview households, using a checklist of desired shots. The list included all of the areas and items cited previously, with specific reminders to get shots of both closed and open cabinets, refrigerators, pantries, and any other closed storage, along with close-ups of decorative objects on walls and countertops, as well as piles of papers, shopping bags, and any other ephemera from daily life. Because the emphasis in these photos was to provide a clear view of the physical spaces and the material objects within them, it was unnecessary to include people in the pictures (which simplified the consent process).

Photos from the questionnaire households were taken by the students who collected the information on food practices. Because the photos were optional for all participants, I

anticipated that some might be reluctant to have their premises photographed. So the photo component was offered as a way for students to earn extra credit, with written consent from their respondent householders, rather than as a required part of the assignment. Along with the *HMP* questionnaire, each student was provided with two CORIHS-approved photo consent forms—one for the principal respondent to keep, and one to hand in, signed, with the project—that clearly stated the optional nature of the photos. The photo checklist was also provided to guide the shoots, along with a strong request that the kitchens should not be cleaned or tidied before the pictures were taken. Again, realizing that my students' differing circumstances should be accommodated by a variety of options, I accepted the photos in digital format, submitted on a CD, or as a set of prints and negatives. As detailed later, the latter were digitized in the data compilation process.

For this writing, I have chosen to concentrate on understanding the kitchen as social space by investigating and interpreting how it shapes and is shaped by the activities that take place within it. This emphasis is the most germane to my research focus: to investigate the division of responsibility for domestic food chores in dual-headed households and the underlying issues of gender, power, utility, individual responsibility and preference, cultural norms, and relationship or household dynamics. In this regard, the photographs serve to show how the room that often acts as the heart of a home reflects its household's internal configurations of power, status, and gender in a spatial dimension, and how the kitchen itself holds inherent influences—stemming from its design, composition, and the history of its development—that may affect a household's food practices.

COMPILATION

Upon completion of the *HMP*'s data-gathering phase, there was an immense fund of information that needed to be processed. Most of the interviews yet had to be transcribed, there were 218 written questionnaires to be put into electronic format, and about half of the photos required digitizing. Unfortunately, this required an immense amount of typing, which pushed hard at the limit of my physical capability. Prior to my cancer treatment, I had been able to type for hours at a stretch; but post-cancer effects limited my keyboard time to two hours a day. Under this limitation, the magnitude of the effort required threatened to derail

completion of the project or, at best, to extend its timeframe beyond practical relevance. I owe much to Dr. Andrea Tyree, who found a solution.

Andrea recalled that the Department of Sociology had a policy that permitted Ph.D. students who had been admitted to candidacy to engage undergraduate students as research assistants (RAs) in a course of independent study that benefited both parties: students gained hands-on experience in an on-going research project and earned course credits, and the instructors gained much-needed help with their mountains of work. I recruited and trained 14 RAs during the spring 2005 semester, and the department provided an extra office and two computers, for which I purchased hardware upgrades. With dedicated office space that had 24-hour key-access, seven days a week, I was able to schedule the 14 RAs into chunks of work time that accommodated their class schedules and timing preferences. I maintained a weekly work schedule, communicated with all the RAs by email and phone, and ran group meetings every other week in which we talked about problems, discussed issues and questions, and exchanged information and stories. This enterprise resembled nothing so much as running an airport, with constant take-offs and landings. Hundreds of work hours were logged by the RAs and me, and, much to my astonishment and gratification, the huge pile of questionnaires, long interviews, and many photo CDs gradually but inexorably diminished, as all the *HMP* data were loaded onto our computers. The work continued through the summer and fall semesters of 2005, as some of the experienced RAs continued to work on the project, and a few new ones signed on.

Other factors that greatly facilitated this phase of the research were the immensely gratifying awards in 2005 to the *Household Meals Project* of two dissertation fellowships from the Stony Brook Research Foundation: The Mildred and Herbert Weisinger Dissertation Fellowship and the Dr. Madeline Fusco Fellowship. The funds from these awards paid for computer upgrades, a color printer for the photos, CDs and cases for data storage, and the expense of having all of the *HMP*'s photos that had been submitted as negative strips scanned and converted to digital format. The latter job was taken on by Nina Bais, who worked on the *HMP* as an undergraduate RA until she graduated and then continued to contribute many more hours. A professional photographer, Nina processed hundreds of negative strips into electronic format and accepted only minimal compensation for the lengthy (and doubtless grueling and boring) task.

A minor matter, but one that certainly contributed to the smooth operation of the *HMP*'s RA office, was a constant supply of non-perishable snacks (such as peanut butter crackers, apples or clementines, and cookies) and an electric kettle with tea, coffee singles (like teabags, but with coffee), hot chocolate, and spiced cider mix, plus cups, plates, stirrers, and napkins. The obvious reason for this was the study's subject matter: since it was all about food, it seemed axiomatic that hunger would result. Supplying some healthy snacks seemed like a necessary courtesy. Less obvious but more serious were concerns about RA safety and the wish to maximize productivity. Located in a building on the edge of campus, the *HMP* office was not near any reliable source of food or drink other than expensive, junk-food vending machines. Since the RAs scheduled work time during their free hours, it was likely that those were also times at which they would need or want to eat. It was a long walk to the nearest cafeterias or delis, and for late-night workers, the building and campus would be largely deserted, the walk dark, and food even farther away than during the day. In addition, even though taking breaks was encouraged to keep workers' attention sharp and effort high, it would have taken a long time to pop out for something to eat. So the consistently high level of productivity was well worth my time and expense to keep the RA office well-stocked; and from the many positive comments from workers, it was obvious that this was appreciated and effective.

As had been established with the interviews, each *HMP* household was given a code to keep its identity anonymous. (Specifics are discussed in the next section.) To ensure greater ease during the upcoming coding and analysis phases, respondent households were divided into two broad filing categories: "*HMP* Photo Households" and "*HMP* No-photo Households." In addition, each household's information was burned onto its own CD. Interview households' CDs contained the digital audio files of the interviews and field notes, transcriptions, and photos; and questionnaire households' CDs held the typed questionnaire and photos (if available). After these data were transcribed, digitized, and then coded, each household's CD was updated with the newly detailed interview, questionnaire, or photos. As stated, when not in active use, the collection of raw data, coding materials, and CDs were all kept in a locked storage space. Not only was the security of the information a matter for concern, but also so was ensuring that the labor-intensive processing and compilation of the data would be protected and preserved.

Equally as important as backing up and securing all the data was the task of proofreading and making sure that all of the information had been entered correctly. It was important to have respondents' remarks, whether spoken or written, transcribed directly—without editing or standardizing the syntax, and there were many instances in which the typists could not figure out or did not understand what had been said or written, skipped over phrases or even sections, and substituted their own wording or creative spelling for respondents' actual statements. This all had to be corrected. So, in addition to directing the workflow and other administrative duties, quality control was my job. The audio recordings of each interview were correlated with and checked against the transcripts, each questionnaire was carefully compared in both paper and electronic formats, and all photos were standardized in terms of size, naming, and categorization. In addition, it was necessary to ensure that each household had submitted signed consent forms, and that the household codes had been applied consistently and accurately. Because the RAs were undergraduates, they had a wide range of skills and work experience. I worked closely with each new student until we were both confident that she/he knew the desired procedures and standards, and I paid close attention to the RAs' output as it accumulated. It was an immense amount of exacting work, and I am sure that the students learned quite a lot about handling the minutiae of a research project, and they probably enjoyed an experience that was different from sitting in yet another classroom. But I also feel strongly that these dedicated students gave me much more than I could possibly have taught them. Quite literally, if it hadn't been for their efforts, the *Household Meals Project* would have foundered in a sea of its own undifferentiated and unprocessed data.

CODING

As mentioned previously, all respondent households were coded with a letter, number, and location indicator in a way that provided each household with a unique identity but preserved anonymity. The codes consisted of a letter and number that designated the household and interview or questionnaire, respectively, plus a location indicator. Within this coding scheme, interview households were designated with 1 or 2, while numbering of questionnaire households began at 3 and went up. The location categories were: suburban New York; urban New York; or other state. Suburban New York was the null category, with

no location code, while households in New York City and other states were so indicated and sequentially numbered. For example, a suburban New York participant was Household F10 (the tenth questionnaire household in category F, located in suburban New York); a participant in urban New York was Household M9nyc57 (the ninth questionnaire household in category M, and the 57th located in New York City); and Household N4nj3 was an out-of-state participant.

Content-coding the *HMP* data began as soon as the first interview had been conducted, and it continued throughout the months of compilation. Broad themes were identified, subject categories were established and subdivided, and stories that had been told by respondents were noted. The coding schema that was put in place necessarily reflected the rather eclectic nature of the intended analysis, which involved content analysis, comparison of household characteristics and practices, and cross-references with the household photos (where they were available). I did not aim for a highly formalized method of discourse analysis, but rather I wanted to look in the stories that people had told and the circumstances of their lives for some of the commonalities and social interactivities that make up daily life, in addition to the contradictions, conflicts, and stresses that were manifest along the fault lines of social change—in both individual and family experiences. In order to do this, I adopted analytic techniques from a variety of methodologies and did not adhere strictly to the dictates of any one method. This meant that the coding structure was similarly eclectic, drawn from the various techniques that were employed, and adapted to fit this study's particular needs.

The first coding strategy that was implemented involved an integrated constant comparative system that was based on grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Cobb 1999). In its original configuration, grounded theory produces inductive analysis in a process that moves from specific information to general theory—essentially an ongoing process of grouping and regrouping of data into category codes, patterns, and themes. Analytic coding proceeds in two stages: initial coding and focused coding (Charmez 1983). The first summarizes the data from an interview transcript into descriptive categories. As each interview is completed and transcribed, it is compared with existing codes from previous interviews. Then, matching data are grouped into the

same category, while similar or related data are allied as subsets of a larger, more general category.

INTERVIEW CODING

These procedures were implemented with the *HMP*'s interviews. Specific coding categories and subsets that emerged from the interviews included: *external influences*: in-law/extended-family influences, employment priorities and privileges, health issues, information sources; *self-concerns*: health issues, health-through-food, nutritional praxis, sense of self, self-image, expectations of self, sense of responsibility, expression of love, preference, weight, age, fairness, obligation, change, frustration and conflict, heritage; *concerns re others*: expectations of others, others' preferences, altruism, guilt, health issues, health-through-food, sense of obligation to others, frustration and conflict, fairness, age, weight, nutritional praxis, traditional behavior, traditional cooking, change, innovation, work necessities, excuses, explanations; *household specifics*: habits (good and bad), timing, locations, sense of group, family heritage, family peculiarities, traditional behavior, traditional cooking, work necessities.

As may be seen in these lists, some of the subsets overlap, as similar issues and concerns belong in multiple categories. It must be noted that this is not a complete list of descriptive categories and subsets, but it does provide a sample of the issues that thread through respondents' testimonies.

In addition to the coding categories, certain thematic patterns emerged from the data. These constitute the larger, organizational components of content that provide the theoretical structure and focus of the study's conclusions. Among them are: health issues—both in the nutritional, medicalized aspects of food and as a vital component of change in household responsibilities; layers or streams of power—far from merely consisting of a service that is performed for others, the responsibility for determining food and meals is perceived as a powerful position by many respondents; and food work as a professionalized discipline, even when done as an unpaid household chore.

QUESTIONNAIRE CODING

Information from the questionnaire households was coded similarly to that obtained from the interviews. Identical or allied categories and issues were found in these data, which strengthened and gave further substance to the coding categories and subsets that had already been identified. Due to the limitations of gathering data through a written proxy—lack of opportunity to probe issues and ask follow-up questions as well as noticeable misunderstandings of query wording, for instance—it was apparent that the questionnaire information could be neither as detailed nor as in-depth as the comments that were obtained in long, personal interviews.

In order to obtain an overall portrait of household food practices among all *HMP* respondents, a database was assembled containing demographic details and specific information about the responsibility for and completion of food chores. The latter were classified into seven frequency categories (always, almost always, frequently, even, sometimes, seldom, and never) that were applied to six major food chores or tasks (producing meals, shopping for food, putting away groceries, clearing meals and washing dishes, garbage handling, and recycling). While food-related planning had been investigated as a separate chore in the interviews and questionnaires, it was subsumed into two other categories (producing meals and food shopping) for this analysis. By performing a content analysis of reports from respondents, the frequency with which each member of participant-households undertook each chore was assessed and noted. The resulting data were compiled and a frequency analysis was calculated to show the likelihood of each primary householder and other household members—differentiated by gender and household type—carrying out the six focal food chores.

The work of translating spoken and written responses into quantitative data was performed in a multi-part procedure in order to both handle the volume of information that needed to be processed and to maximize accuracy. Once the seven frequency categories had been established, five households were chosen at random for preliminary coding of members' participation in the various chores under consideration. Multiple variations of questions about each chore yielded adequate information to assess individuals' level of involvement, and it proved to be fairly easy, for the most part, to code the information appropriately. In the few instances when respondents' testimony was unclear, it was almost

always possible to find clarifying information in their responses to subsequent questions. I performed this preliminary coding, and trained all undergraduate RAs in the procedure. Henceforth, as the interviews were transcribed and the written questionnaires were keyed into the computer, the RAs coded participation levels in each chore for all members of a household. I served as master-coder and reviewed their work, correlating the coding with respondents' remarks. Overall, I found the RAs' coding to be quite accurate, and only a few changes were made.

Another aspect of the coding involved the creation of a database of cross-referenced terms from the interview and questionnaire files. With information from 150 households to go through, it seemed like a good idea to automate the process as much as possible. By copying the Excel files and converting them to comma-delimited format, I was able, with the help of a custom-written computer program, to search for instances of a specific word or phrase in the questionnaire responses. The result was a file that identified each instance of the phrase's use by household code and provided the full text of the response. While processing went quickly, there were hundreds of terms that were of potential interest. The number of result files was overwhelming. Further, these were not "clean" files that could be used immediately, but they all needed to be formatted and to have unnecessary information deleted. In order to optimize this effort, I identified the terms that seemed most likely to be germane to the current analytic focus and processed only those files. The others remain untouched for use in another project. The processed files facilitated my exploration and analysis of respondents' remarks, and they proved to be a useful index of concepts, feelings, events, practices, and relationships.

PHOTO CODING

As the photos were compiled, a taxonomy based on image contents was instituted. This was a system of titles in which each electronic image was "named" to give clues to its contents and to facilitate later use. The need for this expedient was due to the nature and limitations of computerized images, which could be handled either as visual files or as lists of file names. Sorting through thousands of images in list format sometimes went more quickly than having to look at each one, so the need for succinct, graphic description was obvious. The names were standardized and short, and each file was tagged with its household's code.

For example, a close-up shot of a closed refrigerator was called, “A5 refrig-closed,” an open drawer containing silverware was named, “C3nyc71 drawer-open-utensils,” and a shot of an entire kitchen was, “K10 panorama.” In many instances, photos had been taken from several angles in order to show the whole room. When this kind of repetition occurred within the photos from a single household, each shot was numbered sequentially: “K10 panorama,” “K10 panorama2,” and so on. As soon as a household’s photos had been named, the individual shots were copied into subject folders, such as “Dishwashers” or “Kitchen Tables” to permit comparison. While this aspect of the photo collection is extensive, and it contains much intriguing information about the specifics of daily life in participant households, it is not considered in the current work but has been reserved for my post-dissertation research program.

As the compilation and coding of the data progressed, it became apparent that the collection of photos, which originally had been intended to serve merely as a sidebar to the content of the interviews and questionnaires, was, in itself, a subject worthy of comprehensive analysis. However, it was also evident that working through the thousands of photos in order to analyze them thoroughly would have deflected my original purpose to investigate the layers of power and expectation in the division of household food chores.

The solution, as previously discussed, was to judiciously limit the current analysis to those photos that seemed to be the most pertinent to the subject at hand. Of them all, the panoramic kitchen shots were the best candidates. Not only did they show the room in which food chores largely were performed, but they also displayed differences or similarities between households in kitchen layout, configuration, decoration, and clutter. Through these images it was possible to look at the kitchen as a social space and to decipher how it may reflect and/or delimit the activities that it houses. It quickly became apparent that annual household income was a key variable in analyzing the panorama shots, so specific information was included in each photo’s tag to permit easy sorting.

Careful selection of just a few shots provided substantive evidence for an investigation of the recent social history of the room and its usual contents, with particular emphasis on the development of the standardized American kitchen during the mid-20th century. The resulting understanding of underlying economic and political currents as well

as the public social engineering of private life since World War II proved to be illuminating in assessing more recent changes and their impact on household practices.

Some of the findings from my analysis of this visual material were presented in “A Look at Kitchens: Revealing the Heart of the Household.” This talk was given at three conferences: the American Sociological Association’s annual conference in Montréal in August, 2006; the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Food and Society; and the Mid-Atlantic Popular/American Culture Association’s 2005 annual conference.

ATLAS.TI

It might be useful to outline an attempt at coding that went awry and was abandoned after it proved to be too time-consuming, frustrating, and inadequately productive. Initially, after comparing a variety of qualitative software packages, I selected Atlas.ti for use with this project. Its specifications seemed to promise the ability to handle written and visual data with ease. However, the reality was disappointing. Not only was the program expensive, but it was exceptionally difficult to learn to use. After some months of wrestling with its protocol, I decided that my limited keyboard capabilities would be better spent by tackling the data in a way that was less arcane. The most appropriate and user-friendly data management program proved to be Excel, which has broad sorting capabilities for both text-based and numerical data. The questionnaires had been typed into Excel format in the first place, and after performing a successful test-run with one interview, I converted all of the interview files from Word to Excel and proceeded to complete the coding and sorting.

The use of Atlas.ti might have been successful under other research circumstances. With adequate funding, it would have been possible to work with a qualitative-research and Atlas.ti consultant to obtain training in the program’s procedures and use. But for a hand-to-mouth research project, the program was not a good fit.

ANALYSIS

As previously mentioned, a subset of 150 respondent households from the *Household Meals Project* was included in the analysis conducted for this dissertation. Households were chosen for this subset in the following manner: because there were only a few, all interview

households were included. Data from the households whose codes began with the letters M to Z were all included, while, of those with letters A to L, only the first two or three and last two or three households in each letter category were chosen.

Some of the analytic procedures that were followed in this project were detailed previously. These included the frequency analysis of responsibility for food chores that was delineated by household member, gender, and household type; and identification of thematic patterns in the data content, such as health issues, layers of power, and the professionalization of unpaid food work. In addition to these methods, others were also used.

To structure my analysis of the interviews, in particular, as well as the questionnaire content, I employed methods of narrative and biographical inquiry (Mishler 1986; Chicchi 2000), and the Loflands' (1984) techniques for analyzing the structure of social interactions. These two qualitative methods are quite complementary, and in this project they fit together seamlessly. The former is a technique for organizing and analyzing the stories that are told in interviews. While a verbatim interview transcript is usually somewhat jumpy, without a clear chronology of events or statement of circumstances, it is possible to reorganize the material into a narrative or story format. This establishes the story's time and place, characters, plot, and resolution (or its lack thereof), as well as the motivation and feelings of the storyteller. Mishler's technique helped to identify critical elements in the story in terms of

...telling which ones predicted change in the events or behavior of individual characters; categoriz[ing] the content of the story and indicat[ing] the function that each category performs; discuss[ing] the meanings in the story; and then connect[ing] those meanings to more global assumptions of worldviews held by individuals or within the culture under study (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:80).

The categories and meanings that were identified in my respondents' stories were, essentially, the classification categories and subsets that were used for coding. Items that accompanied change or the absence of it proved to be the thematic issues mentioned previously (health issues, power streams, and approach to work), and many respondents clearly indicated relevant positions and beliefs about food preparation and who should or could do it that guided their actions, expectations, and identities.

The information gathered from *HMP* respondents was essentially autobiographical, and many of the study's questions sought to find out not only what they experienced from day to day in terms of their household's food chores, but, equally important, how they felt about it. A method of examining the structure of personal interaction originated by John and Lyn Lofland (1971, 1984) proved to be invaluable in sorting through the autobiographical and emotional testimony. Like grounded theory, this technique proceeds from the specific to the general in its analytic trajectory, and it can be used to understand the meanings and nuances of the "Mishler" narratives. First, one identifies the hierarchical categories within each story: 1) the acts and actors: what individual interactions occurred and who was involved in them; 2) activities: what was going on when the interactions happened; 3) settings: where the activities occurred and with what objects; 4) ways of participating: differing styles of and reasons for participation; 5) relationships: between actors and circumstances and actors with each other; and 6) meanings: what significance people found in their activities, relationships, and ways of participating.

The interviews undoubtedly provided much more content and depth for this kind of data-combing, so they were analyzed first. Once this had been done, and the narratives and information categories were established, I used them to identify and explore similar threads in the questionnaire material.

One of the most notable results from these three analytic methods (frequency analysis, narrative and biographical stories, and subject categories) was to realize what was not done in particular households, what was avoided, derided, or not thought of. Usually, when these items were further explored, they provided insight into unexpected priorities or underlying tensions that had not been obvious.

Chapter 3

Quantitative Evidence from Interviews & Questionnaires

This chapter's purpose is to lay forth the quantitative portion of the large body of evidence that was collected in *The Household Meals Project*. These data were derived by compiling information on household characteristics and practices from spoken and written evidence. The results were tabulated into frequency analyses, by demographic categories and food chore type. In order to facilitate meaningful comparisons between both household types and gender groups, the analyses of food chore responsibilities are presented twice for each chore—first, with data derived from all *HMP* households, and, second, with data only from households based on affective, dual-gender principal householders (PHs).

While explanatory commentary and discussion may be found throughout this chapter, the bulk of my analysis, exploration, and comparisons of the themes, cross-currents, and contradictions found in this material is reserved for Chapter Six.

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Before considering the wealth of details provided in the *HMP*'s interviews and questionnaires, it is useful to have a clearer picture of the households from which they spring. Some specifics were given in Chapter Two, as follows:

- Location: 60% were suburban households (on Long Island, in New Jersey, and north of New York City) and 38% were in New York City, while 2% of households were in other states (Georgia, Missouri, and Washington).
- Configuration: almost 79% were dual-gender couples/households, 16% were single-mother households, 3% were single-father households, although both single-mother and single-father households also contained at least one adult child (over the age of 18), and almost 3% were same-sex couples/households.
- Principal householders: 55% were women, and 45% were men (totaling 271 individuals).
- Presence of minors: 57% of households contained only adults (18 years or older), and 43% of households had members under age 18. Of the 64 households with children, about three-quarters had only older children, ages 10-17, while the remaining quarter had children aged 10 and younger. This means that of the total of 150 households, only 15 (or 10%) included young children.

Other characteristics of participant households that undoubtedly had some bearing on their food practices included principal householders' (PHs') employment status, which PH held high-earner status, their ages and ethnicities, and whether or not the household included immigrants to the United States. These factors are detailed in the following subsections.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PRINCIPAL HOUSEHOLDERS

Information on employment status was obtained for 268 principal householders, including 147 women and 121 men (employment information was missing for two female PHs and one male PH).

Table 4: Principal Householders' (PHs') Employment Status

	Female PHs	% Female PHs	Male PHs	% Male PHs	Totals	% of Totals
Full-time work	99	67.4%	106	87.6%	205	76.2%
Part-time work	16	10.9%	5*	4.1%*	21*	7.8%*
No work	28	19.0%	5	4.1%	33	12.3%
Retired	4	2.7%	7*	5.8%*	11*	4.1%*
Totals	147	100.0%	123*	101.6%*	270*	100.4%*
Second job	3	2.0%	0	0%	3	

* These numbers include two male PHs who reported that they were both retired and work part-time. The adjusted total of male PHs for whom employment status is known is 121, and the adjusted total of all PHs for whom employment status is known is 268. Percentages were calculated using the adjusted total, which resulted in a slight overage in the percentage totals due to double-counting in the employment categories, as specified.

A large majority (more than three-quarters) of principal householders, both female and male, worked full-time. When divided by gender, it becomes apparent that 88% of male PHs held full-time jobs, while two-thirds of female PHs did so. The rate of men's full-time employment is greater than that of women's by 20 percentage points, but it is clear that a majority of both genders worked full-time.

Women worked part-time more often than men (11% of women vs. 4% of men), but these numbers are rather close. Slightly more men were retired (almost 6% of men) than women (almost 3%), but two of the six retired men also reported that they held part-time jobs, while none of the retired women did so.

A greater difference by gender is observed among those who reported holding no paid employment. Nineteen percent of female PHs and 4% of male PHs said they did not work

outside the home. However, the definition of “work” was obviously open to individual interpretation. One female respondent identified her job as “a housewife” and said that she worked, “Each day (anytime but usually daytime).” While not income-producing, the effort and hours were obviously seen as a job by the respondent.

Inquiry was also made as to whether more than one job was held. Multiple employment proved to be uncommon: only women (2% of total female PHs) reported working at two jobs, while no male PHs did.

HIGH & LOW EARNER STATUS AMONG PRINCIPAL HOUSEHOLDERS

Of the *HMP*'s 150 households, only 135 (or 90%) provided information about which principal householder earned the most; hence, the data in this specific subject area are incomplete. It is likely that there was some reluctance among respondents to disclose financial information to the informal student-investigators, and it is probable that the topic was not closely pursued in questioning. Family finances are a notoriously touchy subject to explore, even when the inquiries are made by experienced researchers. In the relatively informal research circumstances under which information for the *HMP* questionnaires was gathered, there were, undoubtedly, generational and family-status gaps that existed between most of the ad hoc researchers and their subjects, and these inequalities may have had a negative effect on queries about income. However, even the incomplete data present an interesting outline of financial status in the *HMP*'s households.

Table 5: High- & Low-Earner Principal Householders (PHs)

	High-earners	%	Low-earners	%	No job	%	Even	%	Status unknown	%	Total	Total %
Female PHs in dual-gender HHs	18	15.3	58	49.6	23	19.7	6	5.1	12	10.3	117	100.0
Male PHs in dual-gender HHs	78	66.7	19	16.2	3	2.6	6	5.1	11	9.4	117	100.0
Single-mother PHs	17	68.0	4	16.0	1	4.0	n/a	n/a	3	12.0	25	100.0
Single-father PHs	4	100.0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0	4	100.0
F same-sex PHs	3	50.0	3	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	100.0
M same-sex PHs	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100.0
F non-PH	4											

Among female PHs, half (49.6%) had the household's lesser amount of annual earnings, and almost one-fifth (19.7%) held no paid employment. This means that in 70% of dual-gender households, female PHs had comparatively low financial status. On the other hand, 15% of female PHs were the high-earners in dual-gender households and held the highest financial status. Only 5% of dual-gender households reported that both female and male PHs earned the same amount which gave them parity in financial status.

Two-thirds (66.7%) of male PHs in dual-gender households were the high-earners in their relationships and thus held higher financial status. Sixteen percent of male PHs were low-earners, and another 2.6% were not employed; cumulatively, less than one-fourth (almost 24%) of male PHs in dual-gender households held low or equal financial status relative to their female partners'.

It is notable that the ratios of high-to-low earner status among female vs. male PHs do not quite match up. For example, high-earner female PHs are at 15.3%, while low-earner male PHs are at 16.2%. Correspondingly, low-earners/no-earners comprise 69.3% of female PHs, while high-earners are 66.7% of male PHs. This slight discrepancy shows that it was slightly more likely for women to hold low financial status in a respondent household than it

was for men to hold high financial status. In such instances, other household members (non-PHs) had the highest level of individual income and possessed high-earner status.

Single-mother PHs also showed a varied profile of financial status: 68% were high-earners, while 16% were low-earners or unemployed (4%). In the latter categories, the households' high-earners were adult children. Single-father PHs all were the high-earners in their households.

Table 6: Age among Principal Householders (PHs)

Age	Female PHs	%	Male PHs	%	Single mother PHs	Single-father PHs	Same-sex PHs	Total PHs	Total PHs by %
<25	1	<1%	1	<1%	-	-	2	4	1.5%
25-34	8	7%	8	7%	-	-	-	16	5.9%
35-44	41	35%	28	24%	3	0	2	74	27.3%
45-54	52	44%	53	45%	15	4	3	127	46.9%
55-64	13	11%	24	21%	6	0	1	44	16.2%
65-74	1	<1%	3	2%	1	-	-	5	1.8%
75+	-	-	-		-	-	-	0	-
No info	1	<1%	0	0%	-	-	-	1	0.4%
Totals	117	100%	117	100%	25	4	8	271	100.0%

The age profile of the study's principal householders shows that most were in mid-life—93% were 35 years and older, and three-quarters were between 35-54. The predominance of this age group in the pool of respondents is logical, given that most of the data were derived from households that had at least one of their junior members in college. Although the research was not focused on older parents, their majority in the data is a fortunate happenstance that undoubtedly strengthens the depth and complexity of the *HMP*'s information. This is so because, among older principal householders, there is a greater likelihood that food chores have been both settled and unsettled over their years together than among younger householders. Even for those older PHs whose relationships and households have changed, there is a longer range of lived experiences to explore and compare, which can lead to richer data and more interesting conclusions. While change in food chores certainly can occur among young heads-of-households, the likelihood of change undoubtedly increases over time and life trajectories.

When gender and age are tracked together, it can be seen that there is a slight difference between the groups of female PHs and male PHs: overall, the women are slightly younger than the men. This small age disparity reflects the societal tendency in which many men marry women who are slightly younger than themselves.

HOUSEHOLD ETHNICITY

Respondent households in the *HMP* had a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Such diversity was desired in order to eliminate potential skewing from habits and practices that might have been associated with specific cultural norms. The information about household ethnicity was self-reported by participants.

Table 7: Ethnicity of Respondent Households

Primary ethnicity	Number of households	Percent of total
European-American	85	57.4%
African-American	20	13.5%
Latino/a *	18	12.2%
Indian/Pakistani	13	8.8%
Asian *	12	8.1%
Total **	148	100.0%

* Reported mixed ethnicity: 7 Latino/a households and 2 Asian households

** Ethnicity unknown for two households

In comparison with the ethnic composition of the general U.S. population, the *HMP*'s households include a smaller proportion of people who self-identify as having European heritage (slightly more than half of *HMP* respondents vs. almost three-quarters of the general population) (U.S. Census Bureau 2006), a greater number with Asian heritage (12.2% *HMP* vs. 4.4% U.S.) and Indian/Pakistani backgrounds (8.8% *HMP* vs. 1.5% U.S.) (Hossain, Sehbai, and Abraham 2006), slightly more African-American households (13.5% *HMP* vs. 12.2% U.S.), and somewhat fewer Latino/a households (12.2% *HMP* vs. 14.8% U.S.) (U.S. Census Bureau 2006).

The differences between the ethnic profile of *HMP* respondent households and that of the overall U.S. population are the result of obtaining most of the study's data from Stony Brook University undergraduates. The university's analysis of its undergraduate population shows that almost 22% have Asian or Indian heritage—a far greater proportion than the

national norm—while the percentages of other ethnic heritages are smaller: European heritage (34%), African-American (7.9%), and Latino/a (8.3%). This information, however, is incomplete, as the ethnic heritage of fully 20.6% of the university's undergraduate population is listed as “unknown” (Lindquist 2008).

HOUSEHOLDS WITH IMMIGRANTS

Fully half of the households that participated in the *Household Meals Project* included at least one member who had emigrated to the United States. This is a substantially higher proportion than may be found in the general U.S. population, of which immigrants constitute only 12.4 percent (Lyman 2006). Such a large disparity probably also derives from using Stony Brook University undergraduates as a major source of data. Many of the student-investigators obtained data from their own or relatives' families. While there is no specific information on the immigration status and histories of students' families, anecdotal evidence and the university's location (amid the traditionally heavy concentration of immigrant and first-generation families in the New York metropolitan region) suggests that a large number came from immigrant families. Hence, the high percentage of households with immigrants in these data is understandable.

ANALYSIS OF CHORES

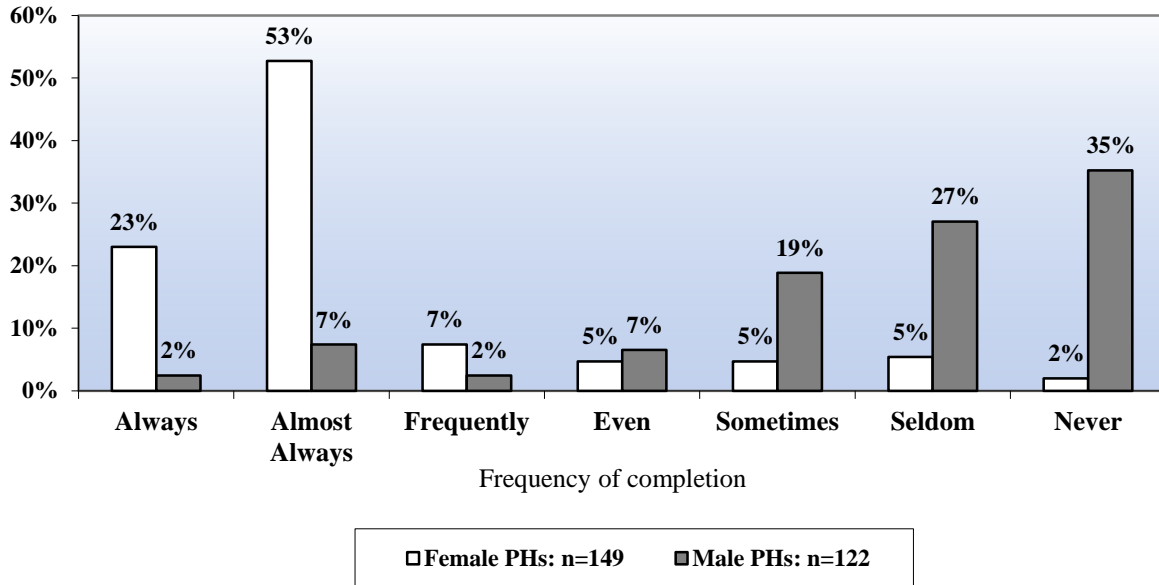
In order to evaluate and compare how food-related chores were divided and habitually carried out, and by whom, in the *HMP*'s 150 respondent households, data were compiled for each separate chore and coded into a standardized format. The information was classified into seven frequency categories (always, almost always, frequently, even, sometimes, seldom, and never) that were applied to six major food chores or tasks (producing meals, shopping for food, putting away groceries, clearing after meals and washing dishes, garbage handling, and recycling). As previously mentioned, while food-related planning was investigated as a separate chore in the interviews and questionnaires, it was subsumed into two other categories (producing meals and food shopping) for this analysis. By performing a content analysis of reports from respondents, the frequency with which each member of participant-households undertook each chore was assessed and noted according to the

preceding categories. The resulting data were compiled and a frequency analysis was calculated to show the likelihood for each primary householder and other household members—differentiated by gender and household type—of carrying out the six focal food chores. The analysis for each chore is presented separately.

It is important to note that these data are derived from *all* respondent households, including those in which the principal householders are the same sex, single mothers, and single fathers. In the first of these, gender is irrelevant as an analytic factor; in the last two categories, gender, age and the established parent-child relationship are so tightly intertwined that it is difficult to tease them apart in order to analyze food work in terms of gender. So, to get the clearest possible look at how gender is implicated in the division of responsibility for cooking and meal preparation, it is necessary to isolate the information from dual-gender households, of which there are 116 in the *HMP*'s respondent base, or 77% of all participating households. Hence, all analyses of food chores were performed twice: once for all *HMP* respondent households and, secondly, for the subset of respondent households that were based on affective, dual-gender relationships—in other words, where the household was founded on a romantic female-male partnership.

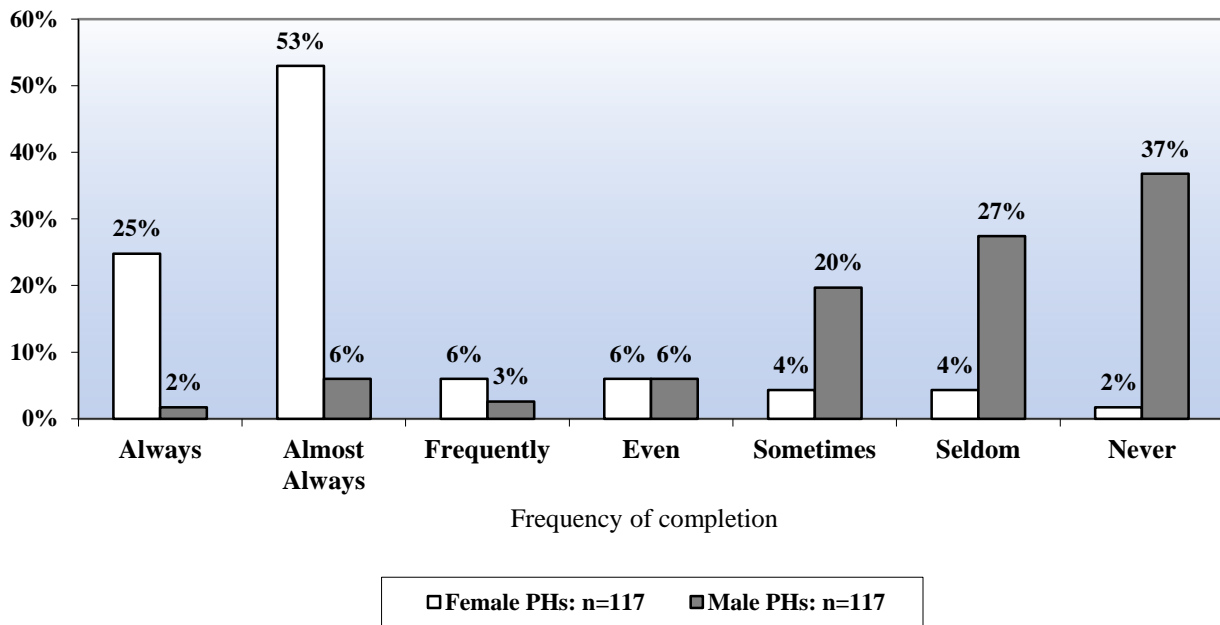
COOKING AND/OR PRODUCTION OF DAILY MEALS

The activity examined in this category was the process of assembling meals to be eaten at home. Respondents were queried as to which household member held the greatest amount of responsibility for cooking and producing meals. Not surprisingly, the greatest preponderance of the work was done by female PHs, thus showing that food preparation has largely kept its traditional identification as women's work. But a majority of men reported that they, too, prepare household meals, as only slightly more than one-third of male PHs said that food work was never their responsibility.

Table 8: Cooking / Production of Daily Meals: by gender, all households

Among all *HMP* respondent households, 76% of female PHs reported that they always or almost always cooked and prepared meals, and another 12% said that they did so frequently or equally with another household member. In total, 88% of respondent women were commonly engaged in producing household meals. Another 10% of female PHs said that they sometimes or seldom cooked or produced food, which meant that 98% of female PHs were involved in daily food production to some extent. Only 2% of these respondents reported that they never cooked or prepared meals.

In contrast, 9% of male PHs always or almost always produced meals, and a total of 18% of men reported that food preparation was a common activity for them. A further 46% of male respondents appeared in the “sometimes” or “seldom” categories, indicating that they infrequently cooked or assembled meals. In addition, over a third of male PHs (35%) indicated that they never cooked or produced meals for their households. Despite this large percentage of non-involvement in cooking by men, however, it is notable that almost two-thirds of male PHs did report holding some responsibility for household meals.

Table 9: Cooking / Production of Daily Meals: by gender, F+M-headed HHs

Interestingly, the profile of responsibility for meal preparation appears almost the same among dual-gender households as it does among all respondents. A slight shift toward greater female dominance in the completion of cooking and food preparation is noticeable, as is a correspondingly slight shift away from this work among men—with the largest shifts (an additional two percentage points each) among women who always cook or prepare meals and men who never do so. The correlation of these shifts confirms a conservative tendency toward the traditional association of women and domestic food work in dual-gender households. In other words, when there are two principal householders, one female and one male, it is both more likely that the woman is fully responsible for food preparation, and more likely that the man will not participate at all in producing meals. However, even though among dual-gender households there was a 98% likelihood that the responsibility for daily meals was fulfilled by the female partner, it was again noticeable that 63% of male partners engaged in food preparation at least occasionally.

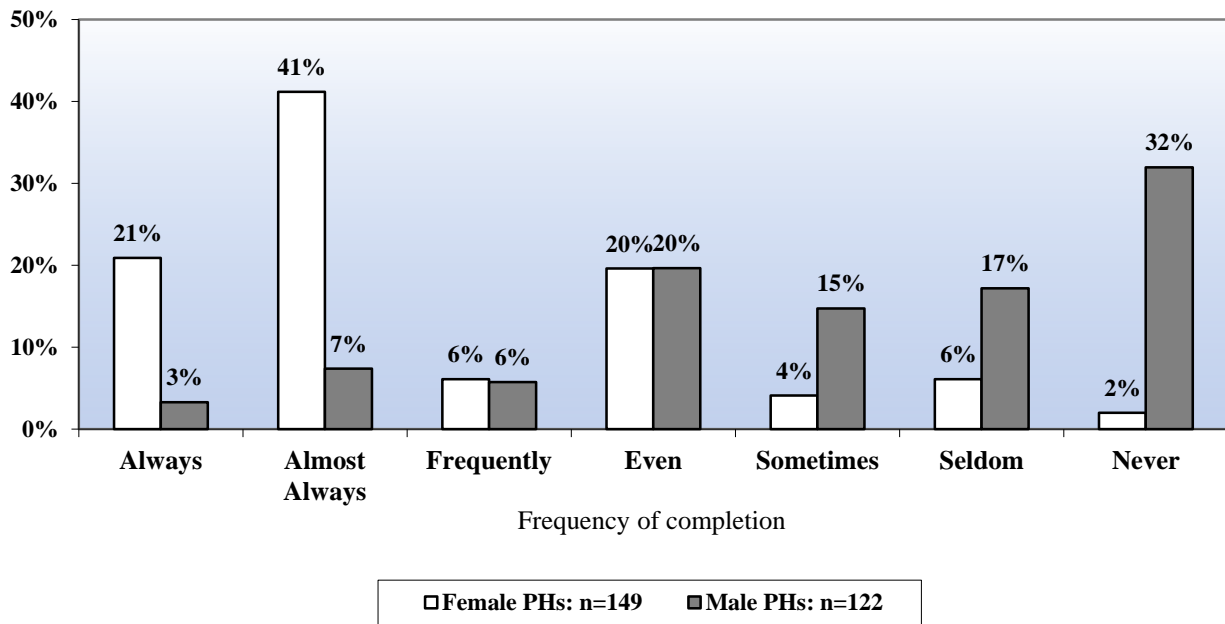
It should be noted, however, that a direct comparison of gendered effort on each side of the frequency scale shows that, on the positive side (always, almost always, and frequently), women out-work men at 84% to 11% (an overage of one percentage point in

each number is attributable to rounding). On the negative side (never, sometimes, and seldom), men out-number women at 84% to 10%. As stated, these percentages show that cooking and preparation of household meals was still overwhelmingly done by women, although a majority of male partners took on some of the responsibility.

The data reveal a similar picture with regard to grocery shopping.

SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES

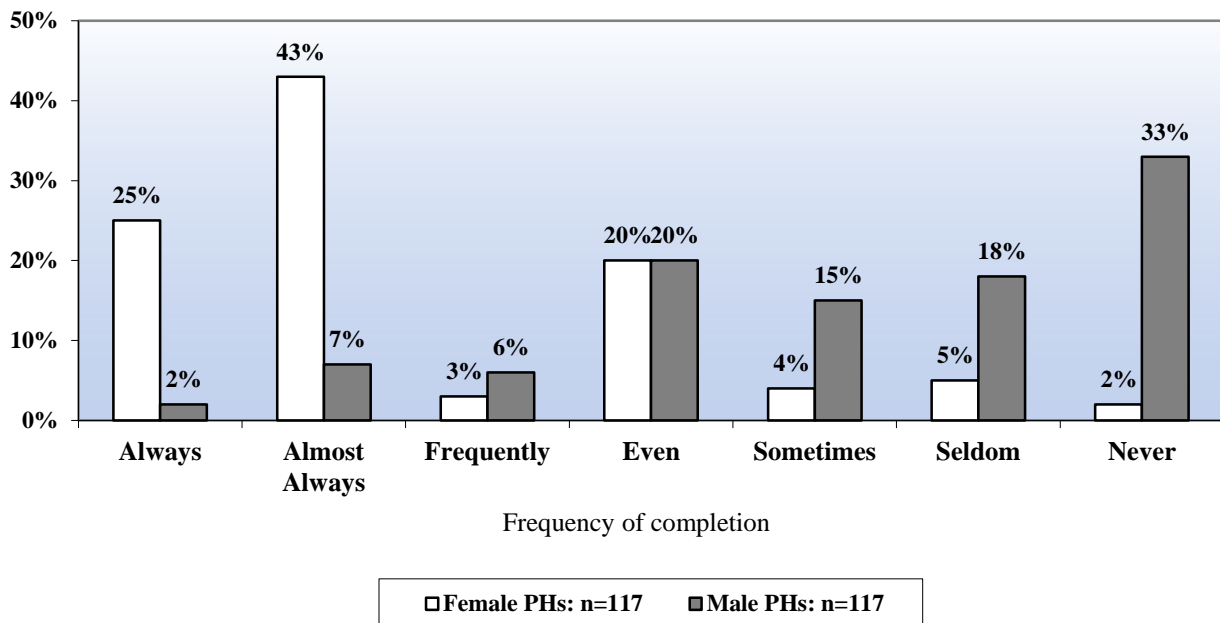
Table 10: Grocery Shopping: by gender, all households



Shopping for groceries was also most often carried out by female PHs, and the distribution of responsibility was skewed by gender similarly to the way it was for cooking and preparing meals. Sixty-eight percent of female PHs reported that they always, almost always, or frequently did the grocery shopping. Another 20% said that shopping for groceries was evenly split between themselves and the other PH or another member of the household. More-infrequent food shopping (in the “sometimes” and “seldom” categories) was reported by 10% of female PHs, while 2% did none at all. Overall, this means that 98% of female PHs among the entire *HMP* respondent pool were involved in shopping for groceries.

Among male PHs, 16% said they were always, almost always, or frequently responsible for grocery shopping. Twenty percent put themselves in the “even” category, where they habitually shopped with or as much as the other PH or another household member. The “sometimes” and “seldom” categories were filled by another 32% of male PHs, and almost one-third (32%) reported that they never shopped for groceries. Again, slightly more than two-thirds of male PHs had at least some involvement in grocery shopping, but responsibility for this task was more commonly held by women. This conclusion is seconded by the data from dual-gender households.

Table 11: Grocery Shopping: by gender, F+M-headed HHs



When the data from dual-gender households were separated from others, they strengthened slightly the finding that grocery shopping was more likely to be carried out by women than by men. Among female respondents, one-quarter reported that they always did the grocery shopping versus 21% of female PHs in the general respondent population. Another 45% of women almost always or frequently shopped for groceries, and 20% shared the task evenly with others. The remaining 9% either “sometimes” or “seldom” food-shopped, and 2% of female PHs said they never shopped for food. Thus, 98% of female PHs

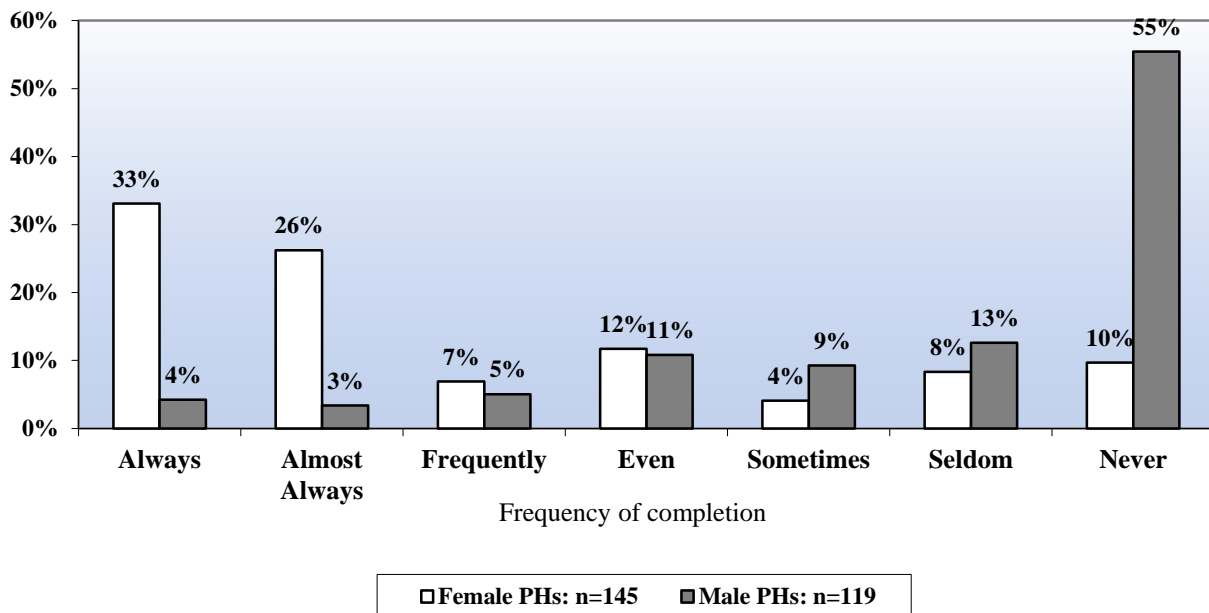
in dual-gender households were involved in grocery shopping, which is the same percentage of women who prepared meals.

Again, the data showed a slightly lesser tendency among men in dual-gender households to do the grocery shopping than they did among all respondents. Fifteen percent of male PHs reported always, almost always, or frequently doing the shopping, with a dip of one percentage point among men in the “always” category. Twenty percent shared the responsibility for shopping with their female partner. Another 33% either sometimes or seldom shopped, and the remaining one-third never did so. (Again, there is a slight overage in the total, due to rounding). While the percentage of men who never participate in grocery shopping is substantial, two-thirds of male PHs in dual-gender households shop for food at least some of the time.

In contrast, the chore of putting away the groceries after purchasing them presents an interestingly complex set of circumstances.

PUTTING GROCERIES AWAY

Table 12: Put Away Groceries: by gender, all households



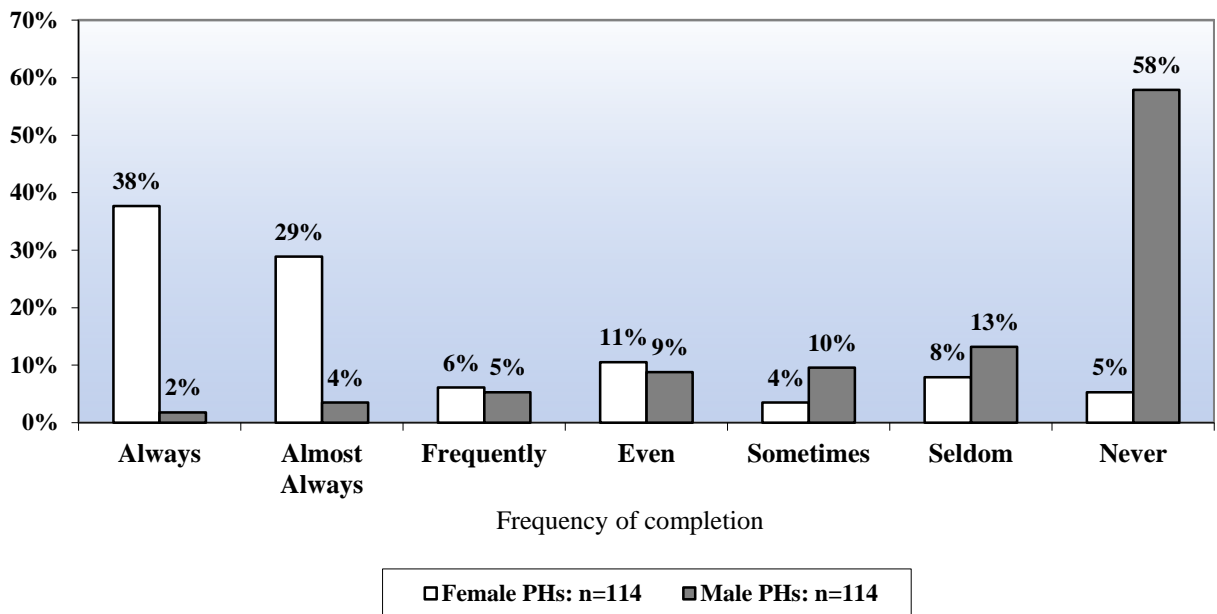
As with the food chores that were previously discussed, putting groceries away after shopping was handled mostly by female PHs: 59% of these respondents said they always or

almost always handled this task. However, the remaining 41% of female PH respondents were distributed fairly evenly among the five other frequency categories. So, it appears that the women in *HMP* respondent households are not as likely to be responsible for putting away groceries as they are for meal preparation and grocery shopping. Overall, 22% of female PHs reported that they sometimes, seldom or never put away groceries.

On the other hand, well over half of male PHs (55%) reported that they never put away groceries. The percentage in this “never” category was much higher than it had been for either cooking or shopping. Only 12% of these respondents said they took care of putting groceries away always, almost always, or frequently, and another 11% shared the task evenly with someone else in their household.

Since both female and male PHs report less involvement in this chore than in others, it is likely that other household members carry a noticeable proportion of the responsibility for this chore.

Table 13: Put Away Groceries: by gender, F+M-headed HHs



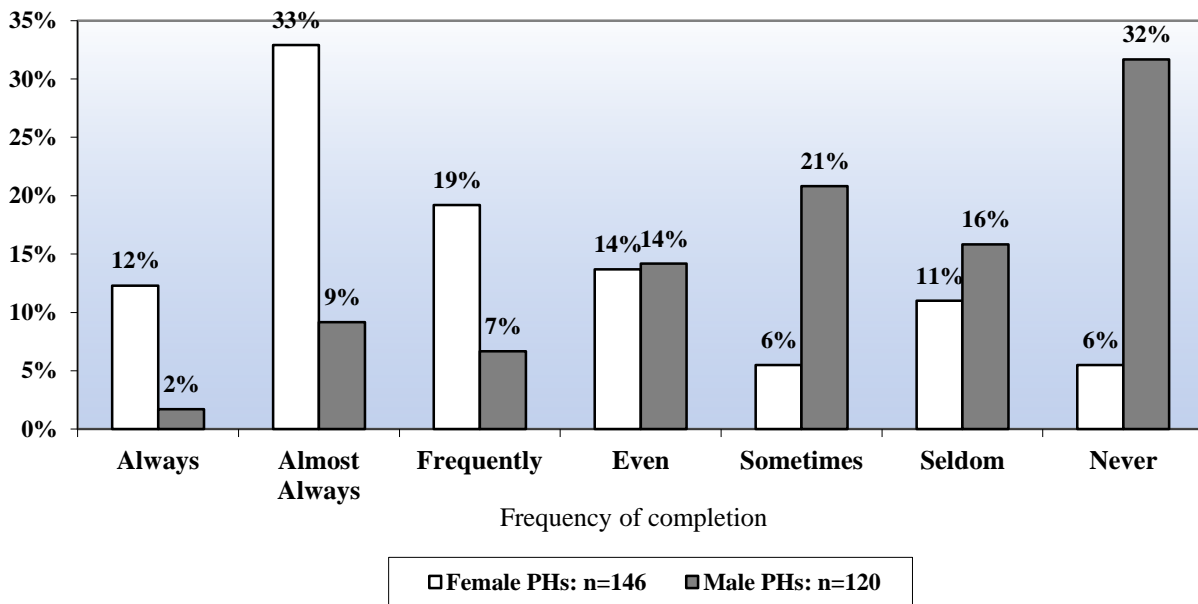
In the study’s dual-gender households, it can be seen that putting away groceries was more likely to be done by female PHs and correspondingly less likely to be done by male PHs than occurred in all *HMP* respondent households. On one hand, 67% of women indicated that they always or almost always did this chore, which was eight percentage points

higher than the same categories among female PHs in all households. On the other hand, there was a smaller increase among men who said they never put away groceries (plus three percentage points), and a corresponding decrease in the percentage of men who said that they always did this chore.

Additionally, among women and men who reported that they shared responsibility for the task equally with another, the percentages are different: 11% for women and 9% for men. This difference indicates, again, that other members of the household participate in putting away groceries after the shopping has been done.

CLEARING AFTER MEALS AND WASHING DISHES

Table 14: Clear after Meals / Wash Dishes: by gender, all households



The task of cleaning up after a household meal—packaging leftover food and putting it away, clearing the table or eating-spot, and washing dishes, cutlery, pots, and cooking implements—clearly is distributed somewhat more evenly among principal householders. Slightly over one-tenth of female PHs reported that they always did the cleaning up, while another 52% did it almost always or frequently. Fourteen percent of female PHs shared the chore evenly with someone else. Together, these categories indicate that 78% of these women handled a significant amount of clearing after meals and washing up for their

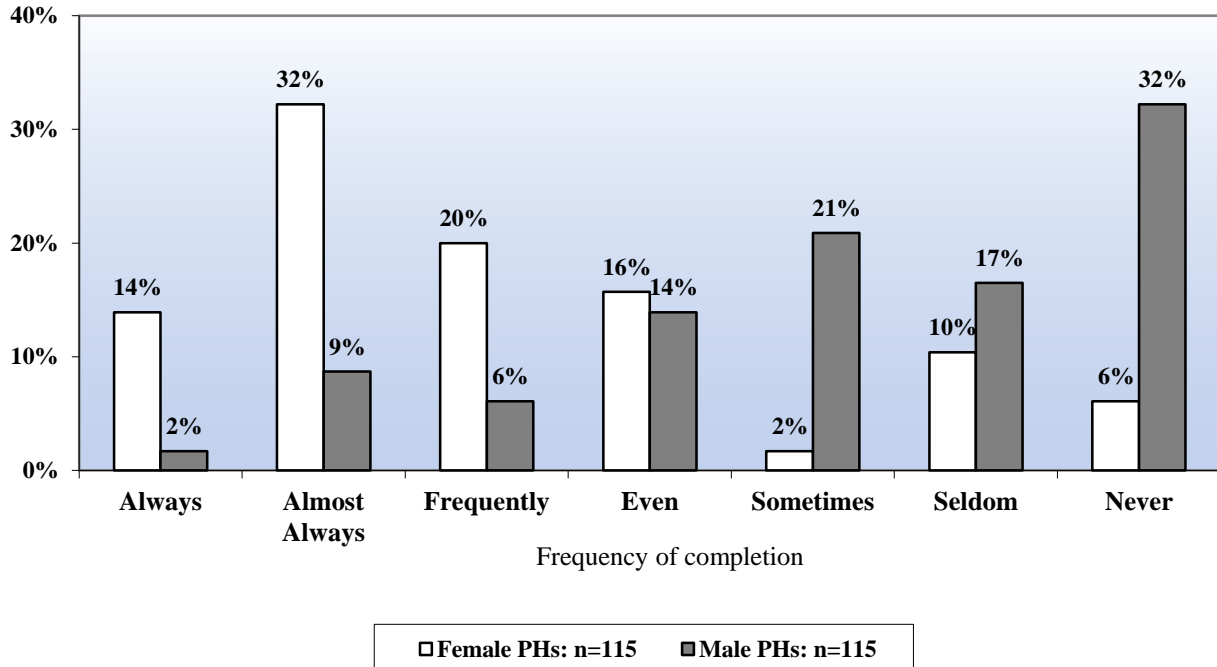
households. On the less-frequent side of the scale, 17% of female PHs said that clean-up was their responsibility sometimes or seldom, and the remaining 6% never did it.

While there is a smaller proportion of female PHs who have total responsibility for this chore than in the other categories, it is noticeable that 94% of these respondents are involved in clearing after meals and washing dishes.

Male PHs reported that 18% of them cleaned and washed dishes always (2%), almost always, or frequently. Another 14% said they had equal responsibility for this task. The “sometimes” and “seldom” categories held 37% of male PHs, and 32% never cleaned or washed after meals.

Altogether, slightly more than two-thirds of male PHs (69%) reported that they held some responsibility for this chore. But it should also be noted that well over half of the men who participate in clearing and washing up are clustered on the sometimes-to-never side of the frequency scale, indicating that their involvement is minor.

Table 15: Clear after Meals / Wash Dishes: by gender, F+M-headed HHs



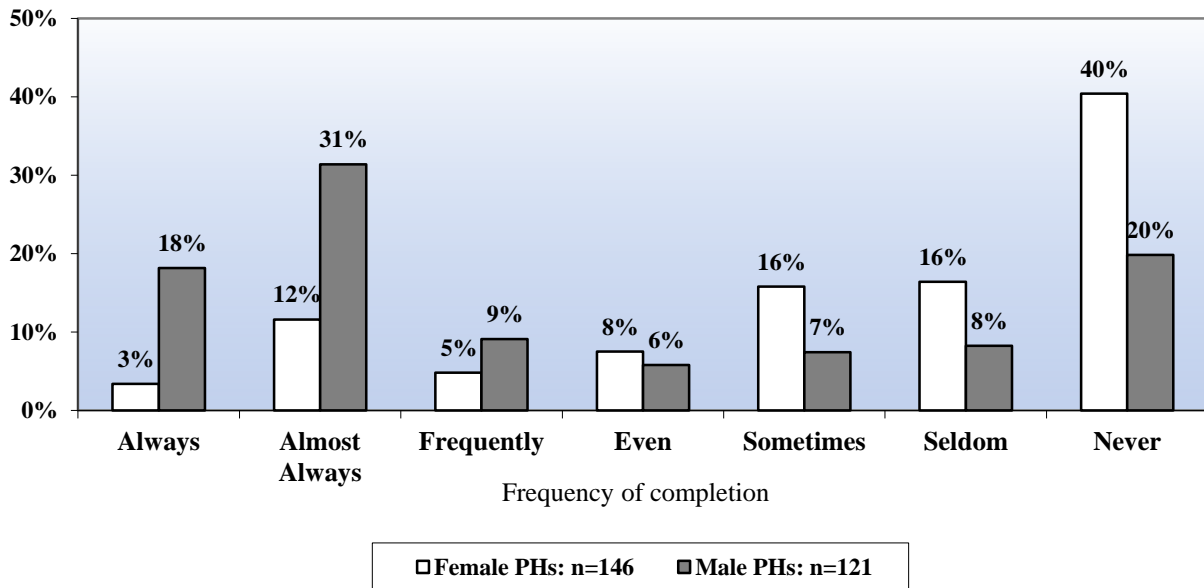
When one looks at the information about this chore from dual-gender households, the percentages are similar to those from all households, with a slight move toward more

involvement in clearing and washing up after meals by women and less by men. The increased polarization by gender confirms this chore as one for which responsibility is *not* gender-neutral.

A slight unevenness between women (at 16%) and men (at 14%) in the “even” category again seems to indicate that other household members are actively involved in this chore.

GARBAGE HANDLING

Table 16: Garbage Handling: by gender, all households

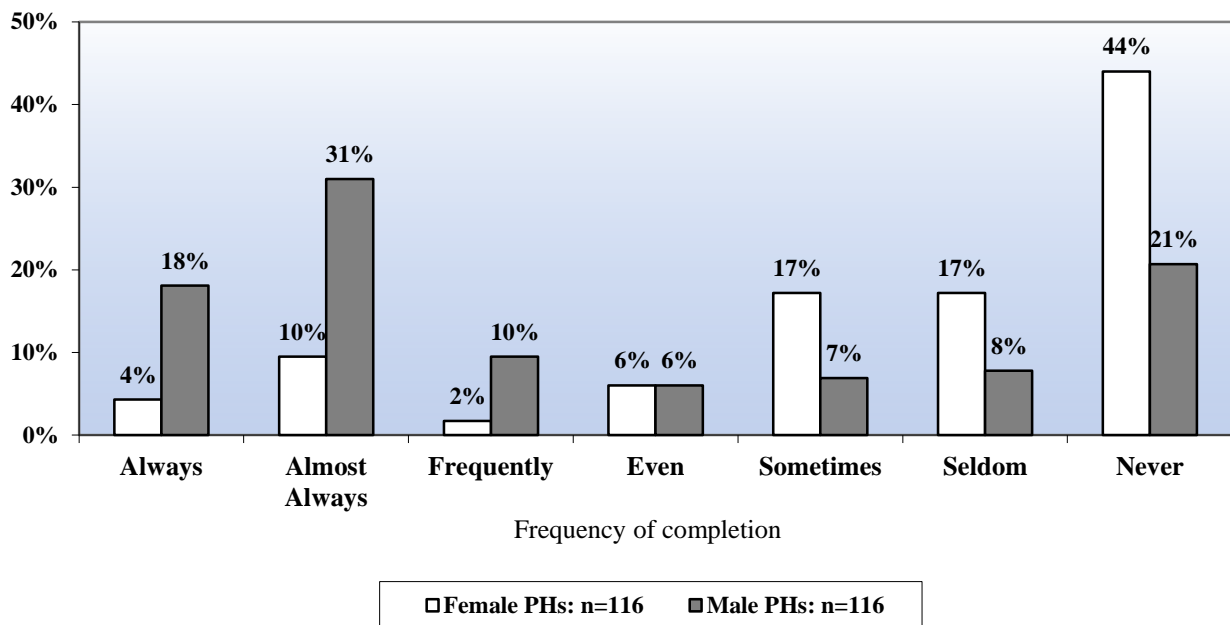


In contrast to the other domestic food chores studied here, which have traditionally been ascribed to women, taking accumulated garbage from the kitchen to trash cans and out for pick-up (mostly in the suburbs) or to a disposal chute (more often in the city) is generally stereotyped as a chore for men. The *HMP*'s evidence shows that this philosophical division of labor is reified in practice, as 49% of male PHs said that they always or almost always disposed of the garbage in their households. Another 9% reported frequent completion of this task. Six percent of male PHs shared the job equally with another, and a further 15% did it sometimes or seldom. Only 20% of male PHs reported having no garbage duties.

Among female PHs, a mere 3% said they always took out the trash, and an additional 12% almost always did so. Nine percent of women did it frequently, and 8% said they had equal responsibility for the chore. Another 36% of female PHs reported that they sometimes or seldom took out the garbage, and 40% never handled this job.

Unlike previous tasks, the majority of female PHs (72%) was on the sometimes-to-never side of the frequency spectrum for garbage detail, while most of the male PHs (58%) were on the positive side (frequently-to-always). It must be noted, however, that the percentage of men who did not participate in this male-targeted food chore was much higher than the corresponding percentage of women who did not participate in female-targeted food chores, as shown in previous sections.

Table 17: Garbage Handling: by gender, F+M-headed HHs



When dual-gender households are isolated from the general respondent pool, some slight change is revealed in the profile of responsibility for garbage disposal, again pointing toward a greater leaning to a traditional gender bias in this matter. It is interesting to note that the differences between all *HMP* households and dual-gender households appear mostly among female respondents. Among men, the percentages are relatively stable. There is a small gain in the percentage of male PHs who frequently do this chore (up one percentage

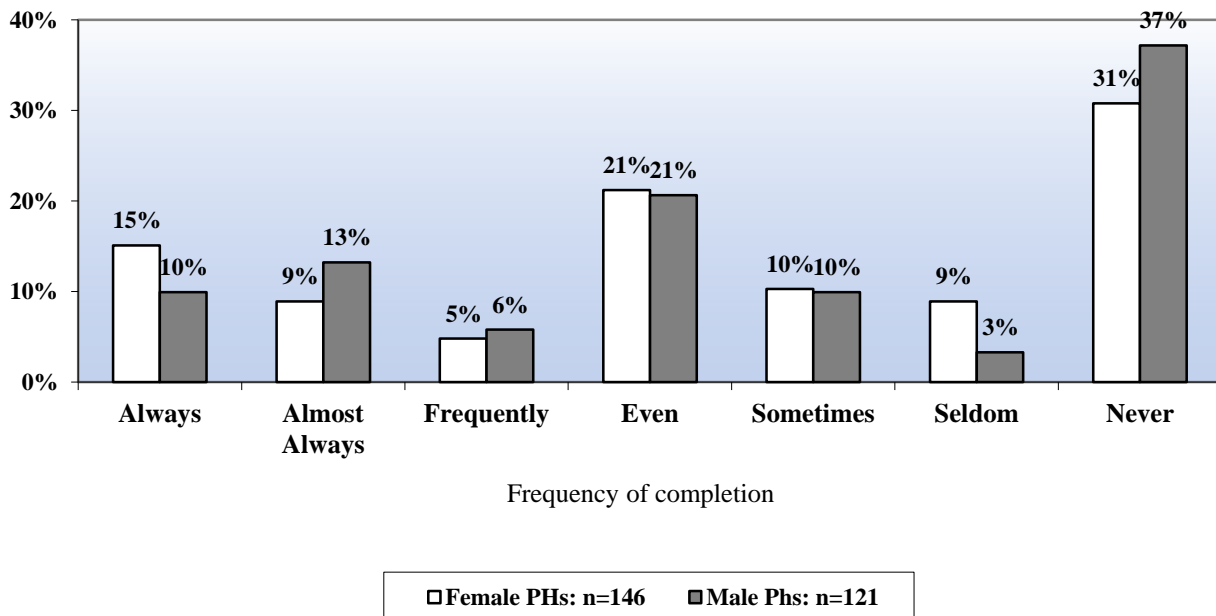
point), and, surprisingly, a single-percentage-point rise in those who never take care of the garbage, resulting in no net change among men.

The percentages among female respondents in dual-gender households shifted around somewhat more. The percentage of women who never handled the garbage rose to 44%, and those who seldom did so increased by one percentage point. In addition, there were noticeable drops in the proportion of women who almost always took out the garbage (down by two percentage points) and those for whom this was a frequent task (down three percentage points). Running counter to this trend, but not cancelling it, was a gain of one percentage point in the “always” category for women.

Altogether, these proportionate shifts strengthened the gender-specific nature of garbage duties. In total, 80% of male PHs in dual-gender households had some responsibility for garbage, as did 56% of women. It is interesting to note, however, that non-involvement in this task is strong both for women and men, which indicates that its gender association is weaker than the other food chores examined in this study.

RECYCLING

Table 18: Recycling: by gender, all households

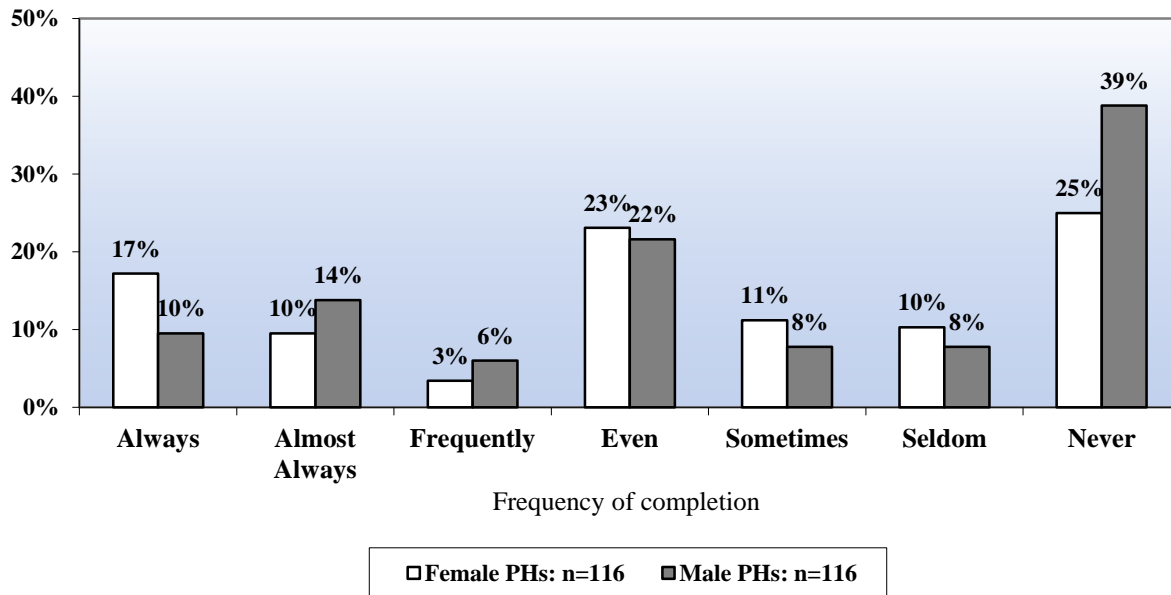


Of all the chores considered in this study, recycling of kitchen materials—cans, plastics, bottles, and other reusable substances—presents the most egalitarian division of responsibility, when all *HMP* households are considered. Although, unlike garbage handling, recycling is done more often by women than by men. A greater percentage of female PHs (15%) than male PHs (10%) reported that they always handle the recycling, and more male PHs (37%) than female PHs (31%) fell into the “never” category—all of which indicate a slightly greater responsibility for this chore among women. But it is noteworthy that the middle range of frequency categories displays even or fairly close participation in recycling by female and male PHs.

In the aggregate, 69% of female PHs and 63% of male PHs carry some responsibility for this task.

Among the chores that have been considered here, there is a uniquely optional element to recycling. It is not a chore that must be done to sustain life or an orderly or healthy household. Instead, the reasons for maintaining recycling as an ongoing activity tend to be emotional—a feeling of commitment to environmental responsibility—or legal—many municipalities have pro-recycling regulations in place, and some enforce them. As might be expected, some respondents reported that recycling never or seldom occurred in their households. Of the overall number of *HMP* households, 12% (18 households) said they did not recycle, and in another 5% (7 households) recycling was seldom done. Information about recycling was unavailable for two respondent households.

The most notable aspect of the 18 non-recycling households was that 10 of them were headed by single mothers. The study had a total of 25 households headed by single-mother PHs (one of which did not respond to questions about recycling), so it is apparent that over 40% of them chose not to recycle, along with one (of four) single-father-headed households. There were no households headed by single mothers or single fathers among those that only seldom recycled. To provide perspective, it is noteworthy that among dual-gender PH households, only 6% did not recycle, probably reflecting the availability of more hands to do the work and a greater likelihood that a non-essential task would be done.

Table 19: Recycling: by gender, F+M-headed HHs

The small shifts shown above in most of the frequency categories indicate that, in dual-gender households, responsibility for recycling is more often held by women than among all *HMP* households, thus revealing some degree of gender sensitivity in this activity. In specific, the percentage of female PHs who always handled the recycling for their households increased by two points (to 17%), while the percentage of male PHs in the same category stayed the same (10%). Among those who never did recycling, the percentage of men went up (from 37% to 39%), and the percentage of women went down (from 31% to 25%).

Two other frequency categories—the “sometimes” and “seldom” slots—displayed the most movement, as the percentage of men who seldom recycled increased by five percentage points in dual-gender households, and the percentage of men who sometimes recycled dropped by two percentage points in the same group. Slight increases occurred in the numbers of partners in dual-gender households who reported sharing the chore evenly and among both women and men who almost always handled recycling. There was a corresponding drop among women in dual-gender households who seldom recycled. Much of this movement toward increased involvement in recycling by partners in dual-gender

households undoubtedly reflected the greater tendency to recycle when there were more people to handle the additional chore.

Some of the changes in these two indicators among dual-gender households point to involvement by other household members in the allocation and completion of this task. More women than men reported that they shared the job evenly with someone else, plus there was an increase in the number of women who sometimes and seldom did recycling—both despite an overall increase in women’s responsibility for this chore.

Overall, the percentages of principal householders in dual-gender households who reported that they had some involvement in recycling were 74% of women and 68% of men.

Of this subset of respondent households, only 6% (7 households) reported that they did not recycle at all, and another 6% said they seldom recycled. These figures show that 88% of dual-gender households were consistently engaged in recycling waste materials.

DEPOSIT RETURNS

During data collection, it became apparent that the topic of deposit returns was a distinct sub-category in the subject of recycling. In some states, including New York, a few extra cents are charged for each container of soft drink and beer that is sold. This money may be reclaimed by consumers who return the empty bottles and cans to any vendor who sells the same brand of drinks. The idea behind this practice is that, through returns, a goodly proportion of the containers will be recycled, and, from those that are not returned, the state will gain a steady stream of revenue. Many *HMP* respondents made it clear in their comments that, while their households may recycle, only a minority of them (40%) returned bottles and cans and collected the deposit money. Fifty-four percent of all households did not return deposit containers, and another 6% of households were located in states without deposit programs. From these numbers, it is evident that where deposits are levied on cans and bottles, consumers’ reluctance to return these items contributes a significant sum to the states’ financial resources.

Chapter 4

Qualitative Evidence from Interviews & Questionnaires

The qualitative evidence presented in this chapter consists of quotes from respondents' interviews and questionnaire responses. Their presentation follows the same sequence of chore types used in Chapter Three to set forth the quantitative data. Within each chore-type subset, respondents' remarks are further organized by subject headings and issues, with quotes cited in sequence by topic with minimal analytic interjections. I believe that this mode of presentation offers a nuanced exploration of the relevant issues in respondents' own words and allows a reader to "hear" their voices more clearly. Finally, in each section, the correspondence between each chore's quantitative profile and the qualitative data is examined.

At the chapter's end, a section on identity is included. This topic emerged as a key theme in preliminary *HMP* interviews, when the study's questions were developed. This adjustment to the investigation accords with the principles of grounded theory, in which the research inquiry is amended to include issues that have emerged during data collection. The inclusion of questions about personal and family or group identity expanded the topics investigated beyond the *HMP*'s primary focus on household food chores. But, as presented in this chapter through respondents' remarks, both personal and group identity and household food practices proved to be strongly connected, even when respondents believed otherwise.

As noted previously, some explanatory and analytic commentary accompanies respondents' remarks, but most of the substantive discussion of the themes, undercurrents, and contradictions apparent in this material are discussed in depth in Chapter Six.

INTERVIEW AND QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

In addition to providing information about the distribution of responsibility for food-related chores, comments by respondents in the *HMP* interviews and questionnaires yielded a great deal of insight into their feelings and ideas on these subjects. To help identify the sources of the wide variety of points of view presented here, each quote from a respondent is tagged with her/his household's *HMP* code (explained in Chapter Two). As previously noted, in order to protect respondents' identities all names have been changed. These remarks were transcribed directly from respondents' spoken or written responses to

interviewers' questions. Hence the cadence, construction, and grammar of the quotes may be idiosyncratic or inaccurate at times. I have chosen not to correct or clean them up in order to preserve nuances of meaning and emphasis that might otherwise have been lost.

Additionally, in order to limit intrusive interruptions for readers, the use of "[sic]" to indicate an error that appeared in the original remarks has been eschewed, except in rare instances to clarify meaning.

COOKING AND/OR PRODUCTION OF DAILY MEALS

"It just happened that way"

Both frustrating and illuminating at the same time, the most frequent response to an inquiry as to how the task of food preparation was allotted was, "It just happened that way." This statement was used by both women and men to explain their involvement (or lack of same) in cooking and the production of meals. While vague and missing the sought-for details of decision making that are key to this inquiry, the remark does reveal that the assignment of responsibility for food preparation often seems so obvious that it is not seen to be a subject requiring much deliberation. Crucial insight was gained when some respondents expanded on the statement and offered information on how the decision was framed.

For some households, the choice that women should produce most of the household's meals was said to be a "natural" and, therefore, easy conclusion. "Just happened that way; it seems like it was instinct" (G13). "[It] came naturally" (M18). Previous researchers (Kimmel and Messner [1989] 2001) have pointed out that "natural" conclusions tend to be anything but that, and this example is no exception. "It just happened that way" meant that there were underlying assumptions and expectations about who should or would be the household's main food preparation person. These beliefs largely pre-determined the outcome and eliminated consideration of other possibilities, which both simplified and speeded the decision, making it seem inevitable or natural. "I don't know, we didn't assign it, that's just the way it is" (K4nyc74). It is interesting to note that the idea of naturalness was cited only in households where women were clearly in charge of kitchen activities.

A number of respondents mentioned that the division of labor in their households followed traditional roles, and this was how women "just happened" to be responsible for feeding everyone: "Just happened that way. It's understood that the mother will prepare

meals—no discussion, simply unknown” (D4nyc67). “It just happened. It has been the same for years. She is the mother of the household, so it is expected” (M12). “She is the only one that is home most often, and, more honestly, she is expected to cook” (G11). “It happened that way. Our household is sort of traditional, in which it’s the woman’s job to decide/plan what meals will be served” (K3nyc68). “It just happened to be that way because of cultural custom” (M10). “It just happened that way because of traditional values of the females doing domestic work” (H14nj4). “It just happened that way because it was an assumed role for the wife to cook” (U7). Most of these remarks indicate that cooking and food preparation are not treated as stand-alone activities, to be evaluated in terms of their own necessities and household circumstances, but instead they are automatically folded into social roles—those of wife, mother, even being female— ascribed to women. The ways in which these chores are subsumed into an identity or role is discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

In other households, the delegation of responsibility for cooking was said to have “just happened” because individuals’ schedules and availability made it seem obvious. This reason was cited when either women or men did food preparation. For instance, when women cooked, respondents reported: “It just happened that way. Probably by who was available—then it just kind of went into routine” (Q3). “It happened that way by schedule...” (G22). “It just happened that way because [she] has the most free time” (O3). And when men cooked: “It just happened that way—Dad was available [and] Mom was home less” [although, in this household, Mom is still the chief cook] (T12). In these instances, the choice of who would cook seemed obvious to household members because the crucial factors—availability of one person at home versus another’s obligations elsewhere—were clear, complementary, and more compelling than ideas about the naturalness of these activities or traditional roles.

Another category of “just happened” explanations focused on the possession of skills, personal preference, or other practical reasons to justify how the household fell into its arrangement of responsibility for producing meals. The following remarks all came from households that had women in charge of food prep. Some cited unique knowledge and skills: “It just happened that way because she is the only one that can cook” (S10nyc34). “It just happened that way because she was the only one who knew how to cook” (P3). “It just happened that way because she is the only one that cooks...” (S10nyc34). Others were said

to have brought it upon themselves: “I suppose it just happened that way; I accept this as my responsibility” (T4nyc30). “It happened that way and it was the [mother’s] preference...” (O5). “It just happened...she assigned herself the responsibility” (X20nyc98). “It just happened that way because the mother took the responsibility” (M7nyc55).

Yet others said they’d taken charge because others would not or could not: “It just happened that way. Shannon knows how lazy her household can be especially in the morning, so she just does it” (H9nyc88). “...it just happened. There was no one other than myself to take that role” (G22). “I’m the mommy. Who else was gonna do it? My husband who works? My little kids?” (V11). “It just happened that way. [I] was a stay-at-home mom...and it continued after resuming full-time work. Could you picture him in the kitchen? Forget about it” (X3). In these instances, “It just happened that way,” again seems to denote a degree of inevitability in a household’s arrangements, but circumstances provide a seemingly logical and compelling reason that satisfies the participants. To an outsider, the outcome may not appear so inevitable: cooking skills could be learned by other household members, responsibility can be shared, and circumstances can shift over time. But habit and personal “ownership” of the activities may forestall the possibility of alternatives. These ideas are explored more fully in later sections, including in the consideration of identity.

“They agreed to the responsibilities” (M7nyc55)

In a minority of participant households, the decision as to which people should have responsibility for producing meals was not a simple or foregone conclusion. Instead, it was talked about—in some, the discussion was ongoing—and members agreed upon the arrangements. “We usually assign responsibility by discussion and agreement” [J5nyc81]. “They discussed if it would be a problem and both agreed on assigned responsibilities...[she] cooks, [he] sets the table” (K11). “The assignment of responsibility for meal preparation had been established by a mutual agreement” (Z4nyc2). “Lorne and Jean agreed Jean was more available” (C5). While these households established a more-or-less permanent system, in other partnerships food chores were constantly renegotiated: “We decide on what we want to eat, then the person better at making it usually cooks” (M13). “They discuss and agree. Usually Tara does most of it, but there are times where Bob would cook because he can cook some things better than she can” (R13nyc44). “Meal preparation is discussed and then

agreed on by me and Marie” (U8nyc28). “[We] try to make it so it works for everybody. There’s a very fluid (not rigid) system for doing things in this house” (S3). “They talk about it and everyone knows each one is busy, so [they] help each other out as much as they can” (K10).

Households, like these, that used discussion and agreement to apportion responsibility for cooking were notably rare. To raise the question in a meaningful way meant that household members were willing to at least consider alternatives to the age-old pairing of women and domestic food production. Given the prevalence and depth of personal and societal habits that reinforce this gendered norm, it is perhaps not surprising that other possibilities may not arise easily or often. One respondent indicated exactly that: “The [HMP] questions made Diana question some of the reasons behind her responses. She never really realized how traditional they are. It’s interesting to see how they assumed the traditional gender roles when it comes to such chores as cooking, cleaning, taking out the garbage, etc., and it’s not even questioned why” (K9nyc77).

“Everyone understands their place” (O9)

When female respondents talked about holding responsibility for cooking and meal preparation, the factor most often mentioned was tradition. Their mothers had cooked, and each woman was brought up to expect that she would do the same and, therefore, underwent training in the necessary techniques and habits. Men, however, did not have the same early training. “I grew up in a household where my mother was the only one responsible for cooking. I think this is where I learned that I, too, needed to be the one in charge of preparing meals. Also, my husband can’t cook that well. [We] have always had this assigned responsibility since [we] were married. It is most likely due to the intergenerational effects because [our] parents had a similar split in responsibilities” (Z4nyc2). “I expected it that way. It’s how I grew up” (G10). “My mother liked to cook, and she was home, so she was the one who did the cooking. So when I took over it just happened” (G22). “It came natural from upbringing” (M18). “It is already assumed that one (the woman) is going to take care of the house and the other will work (the man)” (O5). “According to custom/tradition father works, mother works at home” (F9). “There are two males and two females, so the females cooked. Period” (H9nyc88). “It’s a cultural thing that women do the cooking... Nigerian

men will cook only if their parents trained them to, or if they're compassionate enough to want to help" (K3nyc68). "It's just the way we were raised. The culture. Mommy cooks (most of the time)" (G21nyc97). "The husband knows his wife should prepare household meals, especially dinner" (M17).

In light of the progress that has been made toward gender parity in both public and private settings, it might be thought that the intergenerational transmission from mother to daughter(s) of an ingrained sense of responsibility for food preparation and the skills to carry it out would be a thing of the past. But comments from *HMP* respondents indicate that this intense training of girls is still commonplace.

"I am the next woman, so the responsibility falls on me automatically..." (Laila, J11)

When asked if younger members of the household prepared or helped to prepare meals, almost all of the positive responses mentioned daughters (and other food chores): "She works with me all the time. My husband and son help out very sparingly" (Sherry, J11). "When the husband decided to go back to school, there was more stress on the wife to make more money. Her daughter knew in junior high she had to help out with the family chores. If they weren't done, such as dishes and cooking the rice, she would get in trouble. It was just assumed that the daughter had the responsibility for meal preparation" (M17). "[My daughter] will help cook a meal and clean up. She started doing recipes at home at 12 years old. Started to play around with different recipes, cookies, and stuff like that. And now she does full meals" (G5). "Arlie does grocery shopping, and Lori occasionally cooks. Lori's cooking began about 14 years old; Arlie's grocery shopping began at 18. Putting groceries away has been a responsibility since both were about 8" (G19). "Yeah, your sisters usually help your mother in putting the groceries away. They actually know where most things go" (H12nyc8). "All the chores are mostly divided between Mara and Sari... Mara prepares meals. I [the mother] work 12 hours a day, and Nate [the son] cannot cook a whole meal alone" (J9nyc82). "My daughter will cook a meal once in a while. Now she is older and is capable of cooking. Slowly, she became more and more able" (S4nyc32). "Diane helps. [Why?] "She was born. Began as soon as she was responsible to be 'mother's helper,' late elementary school age" (X3). "I wind up cooking a lot of the time, so I know what it's like. My father just expects it, as does my brother. I am the next woman, so the responsibility falls

on me automatically after my mother went back to work” (J11). “Well, Emma and Kate are the children, so they assumed the responsibilities as the next two women of the house. Sometimes the girls help cutting vegetables, look over boiling pots, help with seasoning” (M10). “When her children are home, her daughter helps with the preparation and cleaning up of meals” (M17). “I only prepare food with my daughter” (X20nyc98).

At times, daughters felt their training to be an inequity: “My father feels that women should do the housework, and I greatly disagree” (H14nj4). “The daughter thought it was unfair because her older brother rarely did the dishes” (M17). “I just always get mad that I’m the one that always helps. Why don’t the men in the house have to help?” (S4nyc32). “The girls spend most of the time on household responsibilities. They feel they are doing things they shouldn’t have to and feel resentful because [their mother] is not more grateful” (Z11).

For some women who served as their households’ chief cooks, a daughter’s kitchen skills made a difference in the intensity and inevitability of their own duties: “When your mother is tired, your sisters take over” (H12nyc91). “Remarriage resulted in Helen having a ‘back-up’ [her stepdaughter] if something came up, such as other obligations or illness” (X17). “About a year ago, my son moved in with his father. Until that happened, I made some effort to cook, but my girls can cook for themselves. It seemed pointless to make an effort anymore” (Z11).

“I grew up cooking. It’s in my blood, and for my family” (L3)

Cooking skills are conveyed through the apprenticeship of girls to their mothers, but not merely as instruction in the mechanics of processing food. More important and far-reaching are how these skills and responsibilities are embedded in the norms of identity, as part of the larger role of being female, especially in the context of a family. “[The daughters] have been told to help out with preparing meals. Women need to know how to cook” (T11). “Diane is in training to be a wife and mother, passing on the tradition” (X3). “They should get used to handling house chores for their own sakes... It helps them to be able to manage a household...in the future” (O5).

Many female respondents cited their own upbringing as key to their current responsibilities for household food production. “I take full responsibility in preparing meals in my household. I was brought up by my parents that the head female of the house, usually

the mother, is the one that is to cook at all times. And besides this, I am the only one in my household who knows how to cook” (H4nyc85). “It just seems to be the role that I’ve taken on. It was my mother before me who prepared all the meals. When she passed away it became kind of my role. So it’s kind of like a female role that’s been taken on from generation to generation” (G22). “As a woman, I’m supposed to do it” (K3nyc68). “She feels as a wife and mother it is her duty” (M17). “She looks at it as her duty as a mother and wife to care for her family, and that includes making sure they are properly nourished” (V4).

In one single-father household, the duty to feed and nourish was interpreted as a component of a genderless, instinctive parental duty: “My father claims that it is sort of an unspoken rule that a parent is ‘supposed to provide food for the children.’ This habit came along with family values and traditions, [and] it evolved from the natural ‘innate parenting responsibilities’” (Y18nyc11).

“She is the only one that could cook awesome” (M16)

As mentioned previously, the possession of food processing skills was often cited as the decisive factor in who served as a household’s chief cook. “She is the only one who knows how to cook” (P3, F9). “Ann likes to cook and has more experience” (M18). “Mother, because she is better skilled to do so” (M7nyc55). “My mother says that she’s the only who knows how to cook...” (Q3). “My wife knows how to cook; [it’s] her preference” (M15). “[She] prefers to cook and likes to, and [he] can only cook on the grill” (G13).

Correspondingly, a deficit of culinary skills was offered as the main reason that men did not produce meals: “Mike doesn’t prepare food because Ann is the better cook” (M18). “I’m not much of a cook” (N4nj3). “I make all the meals because he doesn’t know how” (Y4). “My husband doesn’t cook that well” (Z4nyc2). “She’s the main cook because he cannot cook” (K11). “She is the only one that can cook” (S10nyc34). “I’m the only one who really knows how to cook” (K4nyc74). “He doesn’t know how to do it, so she does it” (F9). “She’s the main cook by preference. She cooks good, and men don’t cook” (H6). One female PH voiced skepticism as to whether the inability to cook was real or merely convenient: “I do it, because when the woman is home men act like they are handicapped” (D5nyc70).

“He’s never there to prepare a meal” (H10nyc89)

In addition to a lack of technical expertise, absence and unavailability were given as reasons that men didn’t prepare meals: “Diana cooks, because Sam works late a lot” (K9nyc77). “Molly does it, maybe because she’s the wife and mother. Larry works long hours” (X4). “My husband worked nights, who else would do it?” (V11). “Nobody is really around for the preparation except for [her], so it’s not something the family knows about” (O6nyc46).

“He will make something if he wants to” (R13nyc44)

Other comments indicated that preference and choice were key elements when men opted out of cooking: “Prepare meals? Not at all, because he used to be a chef and now would just rather that others cook” (W4). “No, I don’t [cook]... It’s very tedious” (G4nyc93). “Don’t perform many household chores. I’d rather do other stuff around the house such as fixing things” (C3nyc71). “[He] used to be an excellent baker, but will never bake anything for the family” (H14nj4). “Your father cooks sometimes when he feels like it” (G21nyc97). “He helps out during the week, but seems to think he is off on weekends” (N5). “He’s a good cook, but decided long ago that it’s boring. So he won’t do anything but occasionally nuke leftovers” (O2).

Interestingly, when it was reported that a woman didn’t cook, it was mostly because there was a better alternative, rather than her lack of capability or willingness: “[She] enjoys cooking, but doesn’t do it often because her husband is a better cook” (C4). “Jack is a chef. It’s what he does; he loves to cook. Claudia is around food all day [works in a restaurant]. She would rather not make it, and she knows how chefs are about their kitchens” (D6). “He likes to do it, and the mother’s cooking isn’t as good” (J7). “Because [he] insists on preparing the meals, and he prepares them better than [she does]” (J4nyc80). “Dad will cook sometimes, because he cooks certain dishes better” (O4).

“He’s the first one home” (L3)

In the rare instances when the male PH served as his household’s main cook, the reasons cited tended to focus on practical expedients, such as availability, rather than on naturalness. “He tends to be the first one home from work so he takes that responsibility”

(U4nyc26). “My dad prepares meals the most often. He’s home more” (Q4nyc45). “My job gets me home later, so his responsibility is to prepare dinner so we don’t eat at midnight” (L3). “He gets home first” (O9). “Usually only George prepares meals. It’s more efficient this way. He understands that Leia requires time for her paperworks, therefore [he] assumes responsibility for meal preparation” (N6). “Tad came home essentially right away and could start making dinner” (J7). “Dave retired and cooks for himself and sometimes the family because he is home more often. Fran works nights and sometimes in the morning ’til early afternoon and sleeps throughout the day” (D5nyc69).

“We do it equally” (M13)

In a few households, both PHs took turns producing meals. “The responsibility of preparing meals has always fallen upon Adam and Nora. There is a mutual understanding among [them] that under certain circumstances one is expected to prepare meals. For example, whoever is home from work earlier, if one is ill, or if one individual had the day off” (A4nyc63). “Both cook. I wouldn’t know how to cook her food, and she wouldn’t know how to cook mine. There is no set schedule; it’s whoever decides to cook” (N19nyc73). “Annie likes things to be perfect. So do I. So, certain things she makes better than me, and certain things I make better than her. And there is no argument about it” (U8nyc28).

Only once was there this response to a question as to who cooks the most often: “I don’t understand. We do it equally” (M13).

“I cook only when your mother is tired” (H12nyc91)

Mostly, when male PHs were responsible for meal preparation, it was as back-up to the main cook, for instance, when she was away, ill, needed a break, or on his days off. “When she is working late or somewhere else, Dad will cook” (M3). “It used to be he would never even make the attempt, and now he’ll try. I guess because my responsibilities increased, and he knows I need his help” (K9nyc77). “Husband...cooks dinner occasionally. Kids left for college, wife works more” (N3nj2). “When mother was sick, father prepared meals for the family” (W6nyc61). “I hardly prepare the food. I usually don’t look forward to preparing it. I do it sometimes because I realize your mother might be busy or tired, and I do not want to bother her” (H12nyc91). “During the weekends she gets help from Don, who

enjoys to cook on his time off” (H5). “At times, he will prepare a meal if he has time to or does not have to be at work that night” (Y4). “Preparation of meals by Father is done only when Mother is at work...” (E3nyc66). “Your father actually started to make food for himself sometimes when I don’t feel like cooking” (G21nyc97). “Once in a blue moon, Gaston cooks” (Z6).

A few households reported that a change in the male PH’s employment circumstances (most often, retirement) led to increased involvement in food preparation: “Recently, Dave started cooking when Fran is not home. Three years ago, he retired and spends more time at home” (D5nyc69). “In the last year, my husband...[has] been cooking dinner a little more often. Almost on a weekly basis, dinner will be ready.” [What caused this change?] “My husband’s awareness that he is home and has more time to prepare a meal than I do, since he retired” (G22). “Now that Matt is retired, he helps more in the kitchen” (M18). “Dad cooks more, now that he is self-employed” (M3).

“Occasionally, he helps” (U5)

The concept of helping was a key element in reports of male involvement in meal preparation. Giving assistance to the head cook at mealtimes constituted almost all of some men’s culinary activities. “The husband knew he should help out...and try to make meal time a time of enjoyment and try to make it more comfortable. ... My husband helps out at least three times a week.” (M17). “Frank helps Jennie when possible, about twice a week” (H10nyc89). “Mom told [her] husband what to do, whatever she needs help with” (N3nj2). “Basically, I am the dictator. I will say, ‘I’m making this for dinner. Dean, will you prepare the veggies?’” (N5). “Remarriage of Helen to Tom resulted in a slight help with some cooking. He barbecues in summer” (X17). “Dad helps a lot with preparation once or twice a week” (M5).

In other instances, the lines between helper and cook were not completely clear, as decision-making about what to prepare was done by the “helper” (usually the woman), who acted as sous-chef and prepped the food so the “cook” (usually the man) could apply heat. “Monica will prepare food (ex: corn, shish kebobs, and a marinated steak) so that Ben can cook it on the grill” (G13). “The wife decides what to eat and buys it and puts it out, then the husband assembles and cooks it” (M12).

“Family should share responsibilities, but doesn’t” (H7nyc86)

Respondents’ comments made it clear that assistance in the kitchen—or, more accurately, the lack of assistance in the kitchen—was a source of contention in many households: “The mother accepts the role [of cook], sometimes resentfully. The mother knows she works hard and wants the father to help” (D4nyc67). “Sometimes I tell my husband to prepare some meals, so it could be a source of disagreement at times, because he doesn’t want to, usually” (G22). “Tara usually does most of the preparation for food at home. She’d prefer equal helping from husband and wife, but she doesn’t really get it” (R13nyc44). “My husband gets home before me from work. He should be somewhat responsible for the meals. He doesn’t agree” (S4nyc32). “Sometimes Tanya gets tired of always being the one who cooks and wishes that her husband would cook sometimes, as well” (Z4nyc2). “Mom wants more people to take part in food decisions” (M3). “My mother gets mad when nobody helps her. So then we all pitch in a little more” (Q3). “I think the kids should help more” (H3). “Nobody really regards the preparation of meals because they have no responsibility in preparing them, except Molly. Molly dislikes it and would want people to help more. Since Hannah got old enough to help out...Molly asks for help and someone finally listens” (X4). “Mom wants us all to help out more” (M3). “Lora feels her daughters are grown and should help more... She feels they should take more of the burden off of her back” (H5). “The other people in the house are pretty oblivious, for the most part” (N5). “Nobody wants to help” (X4).

“It’s my job...” (V11, F4)

Despite some grumbling about a lack of help from other household members in fixing daily meals, many women clearly claimed ownership of the task. Many spoke of their food preparation work, quite literally, as a job: “It’s my job...” (V11, F4). “It’s my job to cook and plan meals” (K5nyc75). “[She] feels it is her job, her duty to provide meals for her family” (H5). “[Cooking is] regarded as part of her job, an expectation” (X17). “I feel it’s part of my responsibility and pleasurable to me, for the most part” (U7). “She does not mind cooking seven days a week because she feels like it is her job” (M16).

Other household members also saw it that way: “It’s her job...” (C6mo1, K10). “Barb said it’s like a job, because she has to do it all the time or Mike [her husband] doesn’t eat” (M10). “Leon tries to stay out of the kitchen. Eva is his wife and a mother and has responsibility to prepare meals” (T3nyc29). “Tara [is the main cook] because she is the wife, and Bob [a chef] holds the traditional view of home cooking” (R13nyc44). “The father cannot live without the wife’s cooking, and therefore he needs to have at least one meal a day at home cooked by her” (G11). “My wife cooks, ’cause she don’t do nothing else” (S5).

“Too many chiefs [sic] spoil the soup” (G13)

For many, cooking was identified as an exercise of high-level skills that were employed in a precise manner, rather than a casual activity that anyone could do. “[She] doesn’t just throw something together, but cooks everything in a precise manner that is unique to a dish or meal” (O5). “Selina has her own method and way she wants and how to cook” (M15). “I work by myself, so it’s done right and quickly” (Y3). “She has her own way of doing her cooking” (S10nyc34). “She likes to cook healthy and organized. She does things her own way” (T12). “I like things done certain ways” (M14). “She knows exactly what she wants to cook and how it should be prepared” (G5). “Donna wants everything clear and organized, and all people ‘out of the kitchen.’ She can be a perfectionist at times” (X3). “I know what I want to do” (G19). “[I like to] prepare food by myself, because I know exactly what has to get done, and how I want to do it. I don’t have to direct anyone. This way I know exactly what’s been done, how it’s been done, when it’s been done. I have total control over it” (G22).

In many instances, a hierarchy of status and responsibility was clearly established: “Rita has made it clear to everyone in the household that she is the big boss of the family. No one questions Her Highness!” (P3). “What Teri says, goes. Especially with the food preparation and getting everything done” (U8nyc28). “This home is my domain. He’s the breadwinner, but I rule the household” (U5). “My mother...prefers to be the only cook in the house. She doesn’t allow anyone else to cook” (X20nyc98).

“Dad cooks, and the food is not too good” (M3)

According to respondents’ reports, when women cooked they were more likely to use raw ingredients—to cook “from scratch”—than men, who mentioned relying on leftovers, takeout, or fast food. “The food must be made from fresh ingredients and has to be...different every time” (Emily, J9nyc82). “The mother has to make sure the meat is clean. She has to also prepare spices and make sure that the vegetables are cut and cooked a certain way, which is different for each dish” (O5) “It’s important to her to have things made from scratch” (M14). “Usually, I heat and eat the leftovers, but when your mother cooks she does it from scratch” (Tad, J7). “I usually eat the dinner leftovers from the previous day” (Brad, H12nyc91). “If my mother is away, we tend to have my dad pick up fast food” (Q3). “The meals are different in several ways [when Lora is absent]. I use mixes or frozen food or may get takeout” (Don, H5).

“I try to stay healthy... It’s important to know what food goes into my body” (Z6)

Good health was often cited, especially by women, as the primary focus of eating, and this was a key factor in the frequently stated preference for food made from fresh ingredients. “We like to eat and stay healthy. If we eat proper food, it is good for the parts of the body: brain, heart, bones. They like [my] dishes all the time. I cook the meals delicious and healthy” (Selina, M15). “She feels that fresh foods are better for your health than processed, preserved, or takeout” (J12nyc83). “The wife feels a healthy meal is best prepared at home. The husband doesn’t really mind what he eats as long as it isn’t too hard to prepare for his wife. The children don’t mind as long as it tastes good” (M17). “She looks at it as her duty as a mother and wife to care for her family, and that includes making sure they are properly nourished” (V4). “Hyunmi feels responsible everyone is well nourished properly” (O5). “[Nora] believes a good quality meal...is essential to the physical growth and well-being of her children” (A4nyc63). “The way food is cooked is important, due to tradition and healthier life habits” (H11nyc90). “Vegetables, lean meats, and healthy breads. To my parents, these foods show that a person is healthy, so that’s why they eat them. ...Both of them said that cooking healthy is important to how a family looks and is seen by others” (V12nyc25). “Lean meats, fish, no rice. This complies with George’s health needs as well as Leia’s health concerns” (N6). “We try to keep it healthy overall” (U5). “As long as

they are healthy methods of preparing food—no frying, no high-fat foods—those are the things that are important, because they are healthy” (G22). “[I am] not cooking with too much oil or artificial seasoning because we want to be healthier” (H10nyc89). “My mother fears illness, especially at young ages ([for] my sister and I), so she cooks healthier now” (K6nyc76).

Other household members mentioned that they depend on the family’s main cook to produce food that is considered healthy for them. This reliance involves an expectation that a wish for health-enhancing food can and will be fulfilled by the cook, and it results in high levels of both pressure and trust. “The whole family depends on the wife, and she decides what and how the meal will be prepared. The wife does consider health and nutritional value in the food she prepares. Both the kids think that fattening foods are bad” (M17). “For those of us that consider the health concerns of different foods, the methods of preparing food is important. For example, deep frying is something we try not to do” (T3nyc29). “As long as food is not too greasy or spicy it is fine” (P3). “The food needs to be well-cooked, no raw meat and not too much grease” (R3nyc35). “No particular foods [are expected], just healthy” (K11). “We [the family] expect meat with every meal, but also some vegetables” (X20nyc98). “Vegetables and fishes [are important], because they are healthy foods” (M15). “Ben agrees with Gina’s ideas and knows that the foods chosen are healthy for him” [although he believes he cooks better than she does] (J4nyc80).

Even when a family’s food budget was tight, finding healthful foods was a priority and a cause for complaint when they were not available: “Even if you go to these places at the churches [food pantries], they don’t give you milk, they don’t give you eggs, they don’t give you orange juice, they don’t give you grapefruit juice, they don’t give you fruit. These are things people need to stay healthy. You can’t just live on peanut butter and cans of tuna fish” (B1).

“It is important to her that she prepare food with love” (P3)

In addition to viewing the promotion of health as an essential component of food, respondents repeatedly mentioned their care and love for other household members as important and distinct elements of home-produced meals. “I like showing people I love them by cooking for them” (L3). “Lois is convinced that love can be expressed through cooking by

putting the warmth and care into the food one prepares” (A3nyc62). “The husband likes it when his daughter prepares a meal for him, not because he’s lazy, but because he feels loved and cared for” (M17). “The food we eat at home gives you a sense of the love, care and affection that revolves around the household” (J4nyc80). “I love my family, and I enjoy cooking for them and knowing they’ve eaten a good meal” (S4nyc32). One respondent talked about protecting those he loved from hunger: “As I was growing up in China, we barely had enough food to eat. I want to provide for my family and make sure they never have to go through my experience” (A8nyc65).

Specifically, some remarks made it clear that respondents considered home-cooked food more likely to contain love than food from an outside source: “Traditional home prepared meals [are important] because the quality is better than take-out. It makes the others feel loved” (U7). “Nora believes a good meal brings the whole family together. She prefers her kids to eat her home cooking than to eat out at a fast food restaurant” (A4nyc63). “A prepared meal is the way for my woman to show she cares” (X20nyc98). The belief that home-cooked food expresses love is explored further in this chapter, in the section on identity.

“I like cooking. I’m somewhat good at it” (M6nyc54)

Pride in the exercise of skills was another emotional factor that was frequently cited by those who often cooked. “Knowing everyone likes what I cook is a compliment to my hard work in the kitchen” (M9nyc57). “We all take pride in what we cook and how people enjoy our cooking” (N7). “Helen takes pride in preparing the meals” (X17). “My macaroni and cheese is my signature, and I get requests for it, and people expect to see it at Thanksgiving. At barbecues, my ribs are expected” (K9nyc77). “Lorne likes cooking because he’s really good at it” (C5). “I like to take the time to work for the meal to make the food taste better” (H6). “Sara loves to cook for guests because she has great tasting food, and planning for the meal takes a while so the meal is perfect” (M16). “Kira likes to reflect her talents as a housewife and show her enjoyment to prepare food” (M11nyc58). “My grandma takes pride in her cooking. She makes wonderful meals for us... We definitely enjoy eating it” (M4).

“I enjoy people to eat what I cook and their reaction” (U7)

Positive feedback from household members was cited as an incentive: “I like cooking, and I enjoy getting complimented on my cooking” (D5nyc69). “Mother and daughter take pleasure when family responds to their food pleasantly” (H11nyc90). “Knowing everyone likes what I cook is a compliment to my hard work in the kitchen” (M9nyc57). “She enjoys her family appreciating her cooking” (M11nyc58). “I like it when they (my family) seem happy that I have cooked, or they finish what I cooked and I know it’s a hit” (N5).

“It gets me angry and insulted that he doesn’t eat what I make” (L3)

Just as the expression of appreciation for their cooking meant a great deal to some, other household cooks were unhappy when their efforts were taken for granted or passed over for other food. “Greg doesn’t really understand how much work goes into cooking meals. Most of the time everyone just expects Hana to cook” (K3nyc68). “Each person is accustomed to the fact that Karen cooks and prepares meals. It is something they take advantage of at times, by not realizing the amount of work she has to do every day” (O6nyc46). “Jon cooks what he wants when he doesn’t like what his father makes. It gets me angry and insulted that he doesn’t eat what I make” (L3). “If they don’t like what I cook, the kids eat quick soup and microwavable food. I’m bothered by it. Family meals mean a lot to me” (M6nyc54). “Myung loves to eat good food that tastes delicious. If the food doesn’t taste good, he will not eat or [will] just say that the food should have more salt. Sometimes Hyunmi gets distressed hearing it” (O5).

“I love to cook and I love to cook for people, and my husband loves to eat my food” (K9nyc77)

For some household cooks, the responsibility for producing meals was one that combined their own love for cooking with the fulfillment of others’ expectations. This combination was probably the best-case scenario to be found in *HMP* kitchens, but it was infrequently reported. “She likes to cook because she finds pleasure in providing food for her family” (H5). “Most definitely, I like to cook, especially for my husband” (K9nyc77). Yes, [I enjoy cooking], because it’s fun. You can try different things. I like when people

enjoy it” (N7). “Mealtime allows me to unwind. First, through cooking, and then sharing my table with those I care about” (G8). “Most of the people in the household are satisfied with the preparation. Even the person who prepares the meals is satisfied because it is something that she enjoys doing” (G3). “I usually cook because I get home earlier... I don’t mind, ’cause I love to cook” (S5). “It keeps her busy, and she likes cooking good, hearty meals for her family” (O6nyc46). “On the rare occasion that he has time he enjoys it. It makes him happy to be able to prepare food for people he loves. He feels he is making a good contribution to the family” (C3nyc71). “I love cooking, so I see it more like I am doing something I enjoy, rather than a responsibility. I have been cooking since a very young age” (H4nyc85). “I express myself through cooking. It makes me feel good because it is something that I am good at” (H14nj4). “It [cooking] is important to me because of my diet, and I just enjoy cooking. I was a cook. Well, I am a cook, and I just love it” (Z6).

“It’s hard work. It’s messy. After 30 years, it’s the same old job” (V11)

By far, the most commonly expressed opinion among the *HMP* respondents who handled most of the food preparation in their households was that they disliked cooking but did it anyway. “Enjoy food preparation? Not at all, because it’s messy, time-consuming, and I gotta do it all” (V11). “Sometimes, she doesn’t like it because she’s tired and would rather not cook. But she still does” (G16nj5). “Preparing food? No, who finds that fun?” (K4nyc74). “It’s not that I look forward to cooking, it’s just something that I do and have been doing for a very long time” (K5nyc75). “Don’t like it at all, I find it boring. I do it by myself, but not by choice, to prevent starvation, need to eat” (G10). “Having to cook every day of the week and not getting much help doing it, except on weekends, takes all the enjoyment out of it” (T3nyc29). “I work crazy hours, so sometimes I don’t look forward to having to stand in a hot kitchen” (G21nyc97). “I don’t really look forward to cooking, but no one else will or can do it. So I have to” (T4nyc30). “My father prepares food and/or cooks out of necessity and the feeling of obligation. Nothing else is involved, as he claims” (Y18nyc11). “It’s something I have to do in order to feed my family. It’s very tiring cooking all day long” (Z4nyc2). “Nobody really regards the preparation of meals, because they have no responsibility in preparing them except Molly. She dislikes it and wants people to help more” (X4). “My mother doesn’t particularly enjoy cooking. The responsibility was

assigned to her because she was home the most” (J11). “Seems more like work than enjoyment” (M7nyc55). “She would rather hire a maid to do it because she is just far too busy” (P3). “Would rather eat out, but she’s used to cooking” (M11). “She doesn’t look forward to cooking or preparing food, because it’s a very draining process. Only [enjoys it] on occasion, when she has help” (U8nyc28). “Ellen does not like preparing food at all, with or without others” (J10). “She doesn’t like to cook” (Z11). “Too much work” (J6). “Sherry really doesn’t like to cook” (J11). “Done it for too long” (H7nyc86). “Not at all. Doesn’t enjoy it” (M3). “It’s just more work to do” (X3).

“Sometimes I like preparing food, when I’m in the mood” (Q4nyc45)

Frequent articulation was also given to mixed feelings—both positive and negative—about cooking and food preparation by the households’ chief cooks. “I enjoy preparing meals when I have the time and materials. Absolutely not when there’s nothing to cook, or I have to think hard to improvise” (N5). “Sometimes Parvathi loves to feed her family. And then, sometimes she’s tired and would rather not cook, but she still does” (G16nj5). “She enjoys cooking because she’s good at it, but she doesn’t like to do it every day” (J9nyc82). “Sometimes I like preparing food, when I’m in the mood” (Q4nyc45). “Sometimes I enjoy cooking. When I’m hungry” (G17nyc95). “She does not like cooking that often” (V4). “Often it’s enjoyed, viewed as a hobby. But sometimes Helen’s too tired to prepare a big meal” (X17). “[She enjoys cooking] when not pressed for time, and ingredients are prepped” (Y4). “The mother accepts the role [of cook], sometimes resentfully. She knows she works hard and wants the father to help” (D4nyc67). “Sometimes it’s tiring, but I don’t mind cooking meals. No one else will or can cook, so it’s all left to me. I do ask my children to help me whenever they can, usually with mixing or heating foods in the microwave” (T4nyc30).

Amy: “It’s a job.” Blake: “I don’t think about it” (V11)

In other instances, a mixture of feelings was expressed by different people, as both PHs offered their own, sometimes conflicting, points of view about preparing meals. “For Lorne, it’s an occasional fun time to use his chef skills. For Jean [the main cook], it’s a chore” (C5). “[Sarah] feels this responsibility should be shared. [Scott] is accustomed to

coming home from work and finding food” (D7nyc70). Monica: “I like to cook, so it’s something I want to do.” Ben: “It’s not something I spend a lot of time thinking about” (G13). “[Brad] thinks that he should take more responsibility in cooking now. [Shirley] said she could use the help” (H12nyc91). Dennis: “Household meals are somewhat erratic in the course of the week, because some individuals don’t want to eat at the same time.” Vivian: “More than likely I’m the one that winds up doing the preparation of the meals, but I don’t see that there’s a lot of forethought...” (G22). Erin: “Enjoyable but sometimes a pain.” Clyde: “I like meals to be on the table ASAP” (S4nyc32). “Leon hates the idea of preparing meals, and feels he can’t do it well. Eva doesn’t enjoy it but feels that she has to, so she does every day” (T3nyc29). Dean: “Preparation of meals for me is a lot of fun. I like to experiment.” Lori [the main cook]: “I find it stressful. Coordinating everything for the same time, etc.” Dean: “With the years going by, Lori is improving slightly and calming down a bit” (N5). Helen: “[Cooking is] regarded as part of her job, an expectation.” Tom: “Not considered important, would eat whatever was around” (X17). Joan: “It’s important, time-consuming, and hard work.” Jacob: “It’s fun because I don’t do it that often” (T12). “Norman enjoys cooking meals, sometimes cooks meals he learns from TV cooking shows. Meg cooks all the basic meals and doesn’t mind it but doesn’t enjoy it” (W5nyc60). Marisa: “Sometimes I don’t like cooking, but I do it anyway.” Linc: “I enjoy having food ready when I come home from work” (X20nyc98). Julia: “I just come home and make something real quick after work.” Gaston: “I like when I come home that I have a warm meal to come to” (Z6).

“We fight because nobody wants the job [of cooking]” (G10)

Given the range of opinions and feelings about preparing meals that was articulated by members of the same household, it seemed likely that evidence of conflict might be found. Indeed, that was so, as respondents reported disagreements about who should cook on a particular day and underlying tensions about the division of responsibility for food preparation. “Sometimes I tell my husband to prepare some meals, so it could be a source of disagreement..., because he doesn’t want to, usually” (G22). “Sometimes [it causes conflict] when no one wants to cook, but it’s very minor” (Q4nyc45). “Sometimes [there’s conflict] if Donna is tired and we all want different foods” (X3). “Sometimes [we argue], because each

person doesn't want to do certain chores" (T3nyc29). "Yes, there's disagreement. Sarah periodically becomes overwhelmed with doing all the cooking as well as working" (D7nyc70). "Yes, [there is conflict], because everyone in the household feels that Rita does not cook often enough for someone who doesn't work often" (P3). "We argue at times, because Karen feels overwhelmed with work. Also, since the children are older, they should assist, according to Karen" (O6nyc46). "Yes, cooking causes disagreement. I'm not home most of the time, so it's a burden for me to have to prepare dinner most of the time" (J11). "Judy really likes it when Alana helps out, but Alana sometimes feels this is a burden because she's so busy" (K10).

Conflict was also focused on the food: "Sometimes Lorne argues with Jean about what to cook" (C5). "There's a problem only when I don't feel like thinking and he won't give me any preference input" (Y4). "George doesn't always like the food choice" (N6). "Since I lost weight, and my mom gained, she has been baking more, accusing me of not eating, meeting me at the door with food, making all my favorites that are hard to resist. She makes it very difficult to stay thin" (L3). "People give Diane a hard time for being a vegetarian. Constant [critical] comments, and a constant struggle to defend herself" (X3).

"Work takes up a lot of time. Housework comes second" (X3)

Conflict between the competing necessities of paid work and household work was also identified, although it was experienced more often as stress by individuals, rather than as strife between household members. "My mother says it's a stress-related feeling, because besides working part-time, she has pretty much all the domestic chores to fulfill. She has to plan what to cook for all of us, then go buy it, on top of working a job" (Q3). "Sometimes I just have too much work and can't stop, and I just feel too pressured" (N5). "Shirley: I don't have to cook, but I do have to work. If anything suffers, the cooking does. But I always have to worry about what's missing. In the house, or what I'm going to cook for dinner, or what groceries I have to buy when I get off work. Who wants to worry?" (H12nyc91). "Rosa has to cut her work days short on the weekdays, so that she can cook for her family, [even though] she would like to work longer hours" (S10nyc34). "Sonia tries to schedule her household duties around her work and school schedules, which at times becomes difficult" (V4). "I work late and get home late, and that prevents me from making a better meal, and I

have less time for preparation” (M6nyc54). “I can’t do things I want to do, and compress chores around work” (M14). “Meals were planned better—healthier and cheaper—when Donna wasn’t working full-time. Now she is too busy with work. It takes time to prepare healthy meals, to organize and complete shopping lists, and cut coupons” (X3).

“When my mother worked part-time, she cooked a lot more often” (M4)

Change in households’ food production practices was another important topic in respondents’ comments. As noted in the previous section, some changes in how meals were planned and made occurred when the chief cook shifted to full-time paid work from part-time or no employment. In many instances, children and teens—particularly daughters—took some responsibility for producing meals when their mother’s employment made time scarcer: “When Susan began working in 1994, Kayla started helping [to cook], at age 9” (H7nyc86). “When we were young, Mom cooked a lot more, but now she seldom cooks. She’s getting older and is now very tired when she gets back from work. It’s been lessening over the last several years, as the girls got older” (Z11). “My mother went back to work. We had to decide and prepare dinner ourselves most of the time” (J11). “I started taking classes at my job in the evening, so the kids had to do most of the cooking” (R3nyc35). “We do what we have to do. My transcript company started in 2000, and the outcome is that the guys [husband & sons] do more. They don’t like it that much, because they like my meals best” (N5). “Judy got divorced, so she had to go back to work full-time to support the family. Alana had to step up and help out with cooking and getting meals together” (K10).

In other households, the male PH took on more of the cooking tasks: “I used to prepare the meals until I picked up more hours at work. Now, my husband prepares dinner, so we don’t eat at midnight” (L3). “Before, Leia would cook sometimes, but now usually only George prepares meals. It was just found to be more efficient this way” (N6). “It used to be he would never even make the attempt, and now he’ll try. I guess because my responsibilities have increased, and he knows I need his help” (K9nyc77). “Kids left for college, wife works more. Husband helps more, cooks dinner occasionally” (N3nj2). “Becky tends to work later hours now, and Art cooks more of the meals now as compared to Becky” (U4nyc26). “Joan went back to work, so Jacob helps out more with cooking” (T12).

Extended family members also pitched in when women's paid workload increased: "My mother had to start working full-time due to financial necessity. She used to cook more often when she worked part-time, but now my grandma does the majority of the cooking" (M4) "Sonia's parents came to live in the house, which somewhat shifted the responsibility of cooking. They began to help prepare meals. ...The slack was picked up in an effort to assist Sonia in her daily activities" (V4).

A major change in men's employment status—either retirement, a layoff or a cutback in work hours—was mentioned often in conjunction with increased responsibility for meals (this point was touched on in a prior section). "Up until the time Adam got laid off four years ago, Nora prepared dinner most of the time, since she came home earlier. Now, it's the other way around" (A4nyc63). "Alex quit his job to go back to school. Now, he contributes to the responsibility for deciding the content of meals. To make things easier, he'll buy bagels or muffins for breakfast" (M17). "Dad cooks more, now that he is self-employed" (M3). "Recently, Dave started cooking when Fran is not home. He retired and spends more time at home" (D5nyc69). "In the last year, my husband retired and [became] aware that he is home and has more time to prepare a meal than I do. [He has] been cooking dinner a little more often. Almost on a weekly basis, dinner will be ready" (G22). "Now that Matt is retired, he helps more in the kitchen" (M18). While most of these changes were made voluntarily, at least one was not: "When Dean quit working, I just refused to do it all" (N5).

Health issues experienced by the chief cook were another major factor in precipitating changes in responsibility for food chores. Mealtime tasks would shift to one or more of the other members of a household, either temporarily, until the usual routine could be reinstated, or the change was more permanent if the illness was chronic or debilitating. "One time, when Pam broke her arm, [the kids] helped out" (A5). "Mom got sick, causing kids to pitch in more" (H3). "Ten years ago, I had breast cancer. Your father was also around then, so he did most of the cooking and cleaning, and you kids helped. But once I was better, everything went back to normal" (G18). "Donna got cancer and needed surgery. Everyone needed to do more work around the house, especially Diane [the daughter]. Now, everyone wants to see how Donna feels and if she will cook. If she doesn't, then they'll make it themselves or go out" (X3). "Gita has had breast cancer, so she has had many surgeries and is under many medications. So the children help lift groceries and clean house. They will be learning how

to cook soon. Gita is getting very tired due to her medications, so the kids will help her cook” (F9). “When my mother and father had pneumonia in 1998, they were both too sick to provide any meals for us. Instead, my grandmothers came over and cooked us food or brought in takeout. But that only lasted about two weeks” (Q3). “When the mother was sick, the father prepared meals for the family” (W6nyc61). “The daughters cook something for the family if the mother is ill. They usually cook with their discretion and what they know how to cook” (O5).

Particularly notable, however, was how minor the changes in responsibility for food production generally were among the *HMP* respondent pool: some of the work was distributed among other members, but women still produced most of the meals in most of these households. One commented on this situation: “Sarah was not working from the birth of the children until recently, which dictated who performed what responsibilities. When she returned to work, kitchen labor was shared more, but the brunt still remains on her. She does all the cooking, which becomes increasingly stressful, but things have not changed much in that department” (D7nyc70).

SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES

The quantitative data showed that all female PHs and two-thirds of male PHs were involved in shopping for groceries for their households, at least some of the time. Separation of data from dual-gender households uncovered a minute trend toward traditional gender disparities in regard to grocery shopping. In other words, in a household with female and male PHs, the woman was more likely to be the principal grocery shopper, and the man was more likely to be largely or completely uninvolved in obtaining food.

Salient factors from the qualitative responses offer depth and texture to the statistical profile. In terms of grocery shopping, these factors include which household members are responsible for shopping and how the division of labor was determined; whether the shopping is done alone or with another person; preferences and practices with regard to food shopping, including the usual timing of shopping trips; how respondents feel about this chore; and any conflict or change in the household’s food buying habits.

“I am cooking it, so I should be buying it” (H14nj4)

In many *HMP* households, the same person who had primary responsibility for meal preparation also did most of the grocery shopping. In general, the two tasks were seen to be closely tied, and both were all about food, as one respondent remarked: “Buying food is considered a part of food-related chores!” (Y18nyc11). “We agreed that Steve would pay bills. Susan would take care of food” (H7nyc86). “God, this goes back over 20 years. I do most of the food shopping because it is a natural beginning to the entire process. Since I do most of the preparation, I like to do most of the shopping” (G8). “Since I cook the food, I am just expected to buy it, too” (K8wa1).

“It just happened that way...” (T3nyc29)

Again, the elements of naturalness and inevitability surfaced in respondents’ remarks. “It just happened that way, because she is the one that cooks and knows what ingredients to buy” (S10nyc34). “It just happened that way. She always made herself in charge of food in the house, since she is the one that cooks it” (M10). “It just happened that way because the mother is responsible for the preparation of meals” (M17). “It wasn’t assigned. It just seemed natural for me to feed my family” (K4nyc74). “It just happened that way. It was understood when we first got married” (S4nyc32). “It just happened that way because I’m the adult” (F4). “Being the person primarily responsible for food-related chores, my father became automatically ‘assigned’ to food shopping” (Y18nyc11).

Unspoken expectations—of oneself or by others—were also cited: “Sonia feels obliged to do it [the shopping]. It was not assigned nor even asked of her. It is just her preference” (V4). “It wasn’t assigned. I feel it’s my duty to buy food” (K3nyc68). “It was not really assigned, but it was expected of her” (G11). “Everyone usually expects me to do it, and it has become routine” (R3nyc35).

“Everyone kind of knows their roles in the family” (Q3)

Similar to the idea of naturalness was the expression that food shopping was part of a person’s role. For some, it went with being a wife and/or mother: “I’m the mom and I buy most all of the household food” (G22). “I always know what to buy, and I am the mother, and I know what the house needs” (R3nyc32). “Lora feels as if this is part of her job as a

wife and mother. She is the one who should go out to buy food” (H5). “African women are supposed to take care of the house and that includes buying food and things like that” (K3nyc68). “It just happened that way because she was the woman of the house” [Interestingly, the “woman of the house” in this household had been the father/male PH’s live-in girlfriend for only a few months.] (W4). “It just happened that way because of traditional roles” (U7). “Steve pays bills. Susan buys food” (H7nyc86).

For two male respondents, the task of buying groceries was associated with their professional roles: “The only one who buys food in the household is Frank. He is a grocer and has been responsible for doing the food shopping” (H10nyc89). “Matt buys meat products, because he was in that business” (M18).

In rare instances, food and money seemed to be positively correlated. The PH who handled household finances also shopped for the family’s food. “I control the money, so I do the shopping” (Carter, K5nyc75). “The mother figures out how much to spend. She is the primary person that handles the money to pay bills and buy groceries and other things of the sort. Since her husband doesn’t earn as much, he’ll pretty much eat anything” (M17). “Shannon began having the responsibility back when she got the food stamps. So, once she wasn’t on welfare, she just automatically bought the food” (H9nyc88).

“She knows what ingredients to buy and the others don’t” (S10nyc34)

Specialized knowledge and expertise were mentioned as reasons that grocery shopping and cooking were performed in tandem. “Sarah does the cooking and is better apt to know what to buy at the supermarket” (D7nyc70). “I’m pretty much the person who does the cooking, so I can find what’s easily cooked, available, and on sale. I can formulate a few days’ meals in my head as I’m going through the store” (F4). “Gita usually has a mental list. This is another reason why it is best she continues being the food buyer” (S10nyc34).

“We were always just egalitarian, we always split everything” (M13)

In a few households, however, both PHs shopped for food, either separately or together. If they went separately, some respondents shopped independently for food for their own personal consumption. “My mother and father shop alone, since they eat different foods” (V12nyc25). “Everyone tends to eat on their own and they pick up their own

favorites” (G18). “If specific food is wanted it will be bought by that person” (E3nyc66). “Sometimes your sister hates your mother’s food. She obviously loves fattening foods. What she usually does is buy her own fattening foods” (H12nyc91).

Other couples divided the chore into specialty areas, with each person and, sometimes, an adult child responsible for different aspects of food acquisition. “My mother goes to Stop N Shop, my father goes to Pathmark, and they compare prices” (O4). “Mark and Nelly share responsibility. Mark buys fruit, groceries, deli, ethnic foods. Nelly goes to the retail club and the supermarket” (W5nyc60). “Leon shops at the supermarket and warehouse. Eva likes a small grocery and the fruit and vegetable market” (T3nyc29). “My father usually goes to relatives to get food. Mother goes to the market and the deli” (H14nj4). “Joan goes to Costco, Jacob goes to Waldbaum’s, and Josh [their adult son] goes to Stop N Shop” (T12). “In regard to getting a large array of fruit and vegetables, this is usually done by Damon, while the major grocery shopping is done by Sonia. It is not known where he gets his fruit and vegetables from exactly, but we assume that he goes to a fruit and vegetable market” (V4). “Most often, Tamanna will take care of shopping from the supermarket, while Zahir takes care of shopping for meat and fresh produce” (T4nyc30).

“They do it together” (O5)

A small number of couples did their grocery shopping together, as a joint enterprise. “Matt works with Ann once a week with groceries” (M8nyc56). “They go together, so it just happens that way” (D6). “We go together. It ‘just happened’ [said with air quotes] that way” (K9nyc77). “Now, Liam and Mary shop together” (S3). “We always shop together” (M13). “They always discuss what they want or don’t want, and a good list is usually made. They always just go shopping for food together, and that is just how it always was and probably always will be” (R13nyc44). “They make decisions together. If one is alone shopping, they’ll call each other to discuss it” (R5). “They agreed to do grocery shopping on the weekends, mostly Saturday, and it became a habit. Both are available then” (O5). “I get to pick things I like, and I like being with your mother” (N4nj3).

Shopping with others vs. shopping alone

In households where one person was the primary grocery shopper, there was an almost-even split of preference for shopping with others versus shopping alone. Each category had a wide variety of reasons for the preference. Assistance with food choices, an opportunity to fulfill individual tastes, help carrying heavy bags, and companionship (and combinations thereof) were all factors enumerated by those who preferred company when they shopped. On the other hand, respondents who liked to shop alone said it was less distracting, less expensive, and more convenient as a solo expedition.

“Both can get what they want to eat” (K11)

“I like the company, and I like input as to what I should buy” (G13). “Shop for food with others so everyone can offer opinions on the kind of food they want for dinner or the kinds of snacks to buy” (A4nyc63). “She prefers to shop with us kids. That way, she knows we all get what we want to eat for the week and enough of it to last the week” (E4ga1). “They [the kids] have always come with me for food shopping, so they can pick out their favorite foods and snacks” (T4nyc30). “[With others] to buy something that each person likes, to please each member of the family” (W6nyc61). “Shop with others, so everyone can pick something they like” (H9nyc88). “I like to shop for food especially with my daughter. She helps pick out items, and I enjoy buying my daughter things she wants to eat” (M17).

“With others, I’m less likely to miss things we need” (M6nyc54)

Having company on the shopping trip served to hand off some of the responsibility for food choices and helped to ensure that needed supplies would be bought. “As long as her husband is with her, she knows what to buy” (R13nyc44). “Can’t concentrate on food shopping unless I’m with my daughter” (X20nyc98). “I prefer to shop with others. Saves trips to the store, and that way nothing is wrong or forgotten” (Y3). “Shop for food with others, to make sure they don’t have to go shopping more than once in the week. Because everything gets purchased at one time, it saves time” (G21nyc97).

“Shop with others because of company, help, and suggestions” (N7)

Active participation was sought on many fronts: “With others, because they offer their preferences, as well as physical help and companionship” (F7). “Betty likes to shop for food with others, because she has someone to keep her company and to help her bag and carry groceries” (G5). “She does not like to be alone, and she also knows what to buy if she is with someone” (M11nyc58). “I like company to make shopping more enjoyable and help carry the food” (T2nyc29). Sometimes shopping was collaborative: “The older sister loves to cook and buys the ingredients, and the mother knows what is good to eat” (N19nyc73).

A few said it was pleasurable: “I prefer to shop for food with others, because it’s fun” (G10). “I like shopping with my mom. We have fun joking in the store and getting good ideas for food” (M14). Companionship was often mentioned: “I shop together with my wife. Someone’s got to do it. Why not with company?” (S3). “She likes to have someone to talk to while she is shopping” (J11). “I like to shop with others, because I enjoy it” (N4nj3). “Diane likes us to shop with her, because it’s boring alone” (X3). “The family enjoys shopping together regardless of time” (N19nyc73). “If they wish, I will be happy to share time with these chores. And, if they do accompany me, then they most surely get to participate in the entire process that happens before I prepare the meal” (G8). “We [mom and daughter] spend the time together in the store, though sometimes it takes too long” (Y3).

To others, physical assistance was the most important: “She likes to shop for food with me so that I can drag the food home in the shopping cart” (X20nyc98). “Everyone knows someone has to accompany her, since she’s sick” (S3). “Gita can’t carry heavy things, so [the children] need to go with her” (F9). “I have a lot of people to shop for, and I need help” (R3nyc35).

“No complications or distractions...” (N5)

The primary reason given by most respondents who preferred to shop alone was that doing it by oneself was faster, with fewer distractions, than shopping with others. Speed was of the essence: “She likes to shop alone because it’s quicker and she can be in and out without disturbances and distractions” (G16nj5). “I like to go by myself so no one is in my way, and I get it done fast” (Z4nyc2). “Shop for food? By myself. It’s faster” (G14). “It takes too much time with others” (G3). “It’s easier, quicker and more efficient if Rosa does

it by herself” (S10nyc34). “Sarah loves to shop for food by herself because it’s done quicker” (D7nyc70). “I like to shop alone because then I can get in and out of there” (G19). “No, I don’t like to shop with others, because I get what I need and get out of there as soon as possible” (G22). “Mom likes to shop for food by herself. It gets done a lot faster that way” (M4). “I can get the shopping done much faster by myself than if I was shopping with the children” (T4nyc30). “Shop by herself. Gets it done and over without distractions” (G6). “By myself. It’s easier to concentrate on what is needed” (C6mo1). “[She prefers shopping] by herself, since she gets more shopping done at a shorter time. She knows what is needed and can manage it easier on her own” (O5). “I go shopping by myself. It gets done better, and I can stick to my list” (V11).

In some instances, other people’s food choices or whims were experienced as distractions: “I look forward to shopping, but when I’m with my children it ends up taking much longer because they want all their favorite foods and snacks” (T4nyc30). “Shop by herself because she buys less junk food” (F3). “I prefer to shop by myself. Otherwise everyone picks up things I don’t need” (M5). “Likes to shop by herself because Karen knows exactly what she needs for the house” (O6nyc46). “I prefer to shop by myself. I can pick out what I want and need” (T4nyc30). “She wants to shop by herself because she feels like she knows better what to get” (U8nyc28).

Maintaining control over the kinds of food purchased was mentioned: “Lydie shops alone and controls everything” (M8nyc56). “Donna thinks no one [else] can do it right. They’d buy all the wrong stuff” (X3). “I food shop by myself because I like to choose my own food” (G12nyc94). “Yes, alone. She’s able to buy what she usually wants” (M7nyc55). “Leia is a nurse and knew more about food choice. George [the household’s primary cook] doesn’t always like the food choice” (N6).

A few primary shoppers said they found it difficult to go with others. “She shops by herself because she says others just get in her way” (S10nyc34). “I want to shop alone. I like to slowly meander through the supermarket” (Y4). “Take them food shopping? No, they drive me crazy! I forget what I go shopping for” (H3). “Prefer shopping by yourself. I would kill him if he came” (H6).

“By myself; it’s easier to keep track of what I’m spending” (F10)

To limit the money spent on groceries was also voiced as a reason to shop alone. “I shop by myself. It’s cheaper” (L3). “She goes by herself because she gets more done and saves money” (K11). “By herself because it’s quicker and she spends less money” (K10). “Shop by herself, so she doesn’t have to spend much money” (J6). “Shops for food by herself in order to get it done as quick as possible. Also, to avoid extra expenses” (X17). “My father likes and tends to shop for food by himself, because he literally ‘hates’ spending money, and when shopping by himself he only gets what he wants. The fact that it’s ‘food shopping’ instead of any other kind of shopping doesn’t change his dislike of spending money on anything” (Y18nyc11). “If she goes with other members in the family, they want and add too many things in the basket, and the cost of food shopping goes up tremendously” (M10).

Men’s shopping habits

As previously stated, about two-thirds of male PHs are responsible for doing at least some grocery shopping for their households, while the remaining third do none. *HMP* respondents were asked how and why the men who shopped did so and how and why others did not. (As it was found that 98% of female PHs were involved in household food shopping, it was unnecessary to explore similar differences among them.)

A variety of motives and circumstances were identified by men who shopped. Their major points included perceived convenience and availability, preference, and doing favors for their partners. It was also apparent from many respondents’ remarks that only a few men were the primary grocery shoppers for their households. Instead, much of men’s food shopping was to fill in missing items or supplement the major grocery shopping that was usually done by their partners. Again, in these instances, their activity served to help with the chore, rather than to fulfill a designated responsibility.

“Uri works closer to stores than Tanya does” (Z4nyc2)

Having available time and frequent proximity to a supermarket were key factors: “Uri is the one who buys most of this household’s food because he is the only one who works near a supermarket. Tanya just tells Uri what is needed” (Z4nyc2). “Occasionally, Kurt will buy

some food on his way back from work” (O3). “Since my father was home during unemployment, the task was assigned to him, since he had the time to do so” (M4). “It just happened that way because he doesn’t mind and has a day off during the week” (W5nyc60). “It used to be Amy [who went food shopping], but it became Blake when Amy started working nights, 25 years ago” (V11). “The only one who buys food in the household is Frank. He is a grocer and has been responsible for doing the food shopping” (H10nyc89).

“When I (Bruce) shop, I am in one of my elements” (G8)

A few male respondents said they did the grocery shopping, or part of it, by preference. “Matt buys meat products because he was in that business, and Ann buys most everything else” (M18). “Jacob shops because of preference and efficiency. He’s a better shopper. He enjoys going, so he doesn’t mind” (T12).

“She’ll ask him to run some errands...” (M17)

More frequently, doing some grocery shopping as a favor to one’s spouse was mentioned: “Usually the mother buys everything. If she doesn’t have the time her husband will do the shopping as an errand for his wife. He buys whatever the wife tells him to buy” (M17). “Sometimes her husband will pick her up milk or something out of necessity” (G16nj5). “My husband occasionally will get things from the store” (S4nyc32). “During pregnancies, Kurt will go and buy the food” (O3). “Dean accepts the fact that I do most of the work, so he pitches in” (N5). “Andy shops by himself. Christine gives him the shopping list. It’s more convenient for the family” (C7nyc72).

“Well, I [Brad] never actually go food shopping” (H12nyc91)

In households in which the male PH did not shop for groceries, respondents identified a few key reasons: lack of time—always because of work; a preference to avoid shopping; lack of specialized knowledge; or the belief that this chore was someone else’s responsibility.

“He doesn’t have time, is at work...” (C3nyc71)

Work was mentioned as a primary reason that men did not shop for groceries: “Ron has a full-time job and doesn’t have that much available time to go shopping” (C3nyc71). “It just happens that way because Tim is at work a lot” (G6).

“Shop? Not at all. I hate shopping” (S5)

Men’s lack of inclination to shop was clearly stated: “My husband tries to avoid it” (U5). “The husband waits in the car” (M17). “Preference: he wouldn’t do it” (H6). “Sarah understands that Scott doesn’t like shopping, so the responsibility falls on her” (D7nyc70). Lack of attention or interest was also a factor: “I always shop alone. Vinnie will come, but he wanders off sometimes” (U5).

A few male PHs said they did not have the knowledge and skills that were necessary for shopping: “Lee does not like to shop because he does not know how to shop right” [i.e., purchasing healthy low-fat and low-carb foods] (J4nyc80). “I wouldn’t mind shopping, but your mother is who usually knows what to buy, so I leave it up to her” (H12nyc91). “Wife has better knowledge on shopping” (G4nyc93).

“Shop? Not at all. That’s Jean’s job” (C5)

A few respondents declared that responsibility for this chore rested with someone else: “We all leave it up to Lydie” (M8nyc56). “Steve pays bills. Susan buys food” (H7nyc86). “He doesn’t shop. Claire shops” (C3nyc71).

“As the kids got older, they took on more responsibility” (S4nyc32)

Many households indicated that children and teenagers were involved in food shopping. At first, at a young age, they went along on expeditions for groceries, and later they served as a back-up to the primary shopper. Supplementary shopping by teenagers and young adults was a notable contribution to the family’s food chores. “At around 14 each child is told that they have to start helping around the house, and that involves cooking, going along grocery shopping, and putting away groceries” (T11). “Nate does do the grocery shopping after my mother provides a food list for him. He started doing this around the age of 10-11” (J9nyc82). “Andy [now 19] has done the shopping since he was old enough, and

Len [15] will sometimes go with him” (J10). “When old enough (around 11), the children sometimes ran errands to pick up milk, cereal, and other small items at the local store” (K3nyc68). “Arlie does grocery shopping, [which] began at 18” (G9). “At around 17, Josh began food shopping on his own...” (T12). “Daughter participated in food shopping...since age 13” (M7nyc55). “The younger sister started food shopping at age around 11...” (N19nyc73). “Helped with shopping from at least nine or 10” (S3). “Megan [21] occasionally will food shop...” (X17). “Kim [16], once again, volunteered because I didn’t shop anymore. She was an extremely helpful child. I used to call her my sunshine girl” (Z11). “Sometimes I send Rena [19] to pick up a few groceries. She’s been doing this since she was 13” (T4nyc30). “There are two children, Tenielle and Liron [both 11], who help out with the shopping...” (V4). “When Estie [20] shops, it’s because her mother asked her to. She doesn’t mind” (F10).

“Everyone helps out by grabbing milk or sugar or bread or eggs. Stuff like that”
(G18)

Most respondent households reported a significant amount of supplementary food shopping, most often for perishables and frequently used items, by male PHs and older children. “Andy will sometimes run in for an item or two” (J10). “Damon [male PH] will buy some things if he remembers that they are needed or sees something he likes. Leisha [23] will buy some stuff if she knows it is needed and if she has the money” (V4). “Once in a while, Mick [23] brings basic essentials home” (X17). “Kids and husband will go to the small grocery or to the butcher most often” (S4nyc32). “My mother says that she always bought the food for the house. My dad will pick up some things if my mother forgets them, like milk or bread” (Q3). “After her husband drops her off at work, she’ll ask him to run some errands, and he’ll do most of them on his free time [he’s retired]. Her husband understands that the household chores should be shared, although not very equal” (M17). “Getting food is always my mother’s job. But if my dad needs to pick up milk or bread he usually goes to the small grocery store because it’s right by our house” (Q3).

This distribution of effort effectively spread the chore to more than one individual, although, as detailed in previous sections, it was clear that one person usually masterminded the shopping agenda and bore the ultimate responsibility for provisioning the family. “Lora

is in charge of cooking and preparing the meals and buying food from stores. Often when other individuals feel like there are no good snacks or food, they complain to Lora. For example: ‘Mom, why don’t we have anything to eat? I really want cookies.’ And Lora will say, ‘Okay, next time I go shopping, I’ll remember’” (H5).

“If I don’t do it, then it won’t get done” (G15)

As noted, most households reported that one person, usually the female PH, was responsible for obtaining food and groceries, and, in many households, multiple members did at least some food shopping for fill-ins or forgotten items. However, some respondents who were the primary provisioners expressed frustration at the minimal amount of assistance they received with shopping. “My mother says that she would have loved it if we helped. But no one usually helps or goes with her. She has to do it all alone” (Q3). “Responsibility [for shopping] was given to Karen, and only occasionally did somebody else take any. Sometimes Karen feels she’s taken advantage of, and sometimes she feels that she does too much work” (O6nyc46). “Molly will ask for help or say she doesn’t want to do it [the shopping], but she always ends up doing it” (X4). “Sometimes I’m too tired to go food shopping. Honestly, I live with all adults at this point. I no longer have small children...so, I feel if there isn’t enough food in the household, there are adults that can do their own shopping and cook their own food” (G22). “She doesn’t like going food shopping, and it’s rare if she can get someone to go with her like she prefers” (Z11).

“The shopping is done whenever Angie has free time” (O3)

The timing of grocery shopping trips was mentioned frequently by respondents. The two most popular times for this activity seemed to be after work and on the weekend or a day off from work. Some also said that they strategized their shopping while at work, planning menus and making lists. A few managed to do some food shopping during lunch breaks.

“On the way from home to work...” (S5, U4nyc26)

“Normally, after work on the way home” (W6nyc61). “She (Mom) shops for food after work. It’s her chore, she has no problem with it” (G12nyc94). “My mom will go food shopping after work and carry food home, then immediately cook it” (X20nyc98).

“Meals...are usually unplanned and shopped for on a same-day basis, at whatever time the workday ends. I like to shop at 24-hour supermarkets at 2 a.m. There are no other customers; it’s also after work and leisurely” (Y4). “Occasionally, Kurt will buy some food on his way back from work” (O3). “After work, approximately three times a week. That’s the only time Uri is free” (Z4nyc2). “I take care of shopping and cooking after work. Sometimes I may leave work early to get the shopping done, but generally after work I have enough time to plan out meals and get whatever I need” (T4nyc30).

“A weekend morning, whenever I have time” (Z6)

Weekends and days off from work were favored times for grocery shopping, particularly when two people went together. “Shopping is usually done on the weekends when both parents are off” (G3). “They agreed to do grocery shopping in the weekends, mostly Saturday, and it became a habit. Both are available then” (O5). “Sunday mornings, because it’s not busy, and Dee and Greg are home from work” (N7). “On a day where they are both off, or whenever they have free time” (R13nyc44).

For others, a work-free day offered the time needed for grocery shopping: “Sometimes Gino shops on Saturday. He doesn’t work on Saturday” (M12). “Sunday morning. This is the time she has time to do it, and she likes to buy food to make a big home-cooked meal Sunday night” (K10). “Sunday mornings. It became a routine, when her mom used to do it” (N3nj2). “Tuesdays at noon. It’s my day off, and that’s when I prefer to go” (V11). “Thursday afternoon, Norman’s day off” (W5nyc60).

Other reasons for grocery shopping at particular times that were mentioned by respondents included health, finances, and availability of goods. “Morning, Sunday or Monday. That’s when I’m healthiest” (H3). “Friday noon. It’s payday for Susan” (H7nyc86). “Monday or Tuesday mornings. Because if you wait, the fresh produce will be gone, and they run out of promotional items and sales” (U5).

“She does plan what to do for dinner during the work day...” (K10)

Sometimes the responsibility for grocery shopping overlapped into respondents’ time at work, as both planning and the shopping itself were sandwiched into spare moments such as lunchtime. “Sometimes I think of things to buy at work and write them down” (M14).

“Barb spends most of her day at work, and she makes mental notes of what she needs to stop by the grocery and buy before coming home and cooking it” (M10). “I (Hilary) think about it at work. Carl [son, 19] thinks about what he’s going to cook for himself and shops at work throughout the day” (M6nyc54). “Ivie often does food shopping during lunch break. There’s no conflict with job duties because she has time...” (K3nyc68). “It’s part of a routine. I automatically allot an hour or two for food shopping. My work allows me the flexibility of working as long as I’m in phone contact” (G8). “Dean schedules shopping into his pickups and deliveries for work. He supermarket shops or picks up fast food” (N5).

Change...or not

Changes in who held responsibility for a household’s grocery shopping occurred in a variety of circumstances. As children got older and, most particularly in suburban households, after they got driver’s licenses, many participated in a substantive way. Sometimes, the advent of full-time work for a formerly stay-at-home mom caused others to take more of the burden of supplying the household. Or the retirement of the male PH meant he gained a greater supply of free time that could be spent on household chores. Mostly, however, respondents reported that little or no change in terms of who went food shopping had occurred in their households over the years.

“Clara has always done it, and it has never changed” (G4nyc93)

Many respondents noted that the assignment of responsibility for grocery shopping had been a constant in their households over time and, sometimes, in spite of other changes in routine. “Although Ivie started working full-time, about 10 years ago, she still had the same responsibility” (K3nyc68). “Vicki was a stay-at-home mom up until a year ago, when she went back to work. She still does the cooking, so prefers to do the shopping” (N4nj3). “It is agreed that I have to make time to shop, but I did the shopping when I was working, as well” (U5). “It is the way it always has been” (G6). “I have always done the shopping since I can remember” (Z6). “It just happened that way. It was understood when we first got married” (S4nyc32).

At times, the lack of change led to disagreement: “Now it is [a source of conflict], because my mother works full time now, and shopping still remains her responsibility” (J11).

For others, the lack of change—or the stability of habit—seemed to prevent conflict: “Routine keeps it from being a disagreement” (G4nyc93).

Reasons for change

When change did occur, it was for a variety of reasons. Among them were unemployment, a move, a change in work hours or retirement, children getting older, or sheer overload.

Whether it was because more time or less money was available, the loss of a job could occasion a change in who shopped: “When my father was unemployed he did the majority of shopping for my mom” (M4). “When Ellie was unemployed, Pierre [her son] had to buy more of the food” (H13nyc92).

Sometimes a change in household location sparked a change in shopping habits: “The move definitely made me shop because there are so many supermarkets around. Plus, they’re cleaner and welcoming” (J3nyc79). “Before we bought the new house, Leon used to do most of the shopping. Now Eva does. Leon recently has been doing a lot of work with the house, leaving food shopping for Eva” (T3nyc29).

Having fewer or different work hours was a factor: “Dean now does the shopping instead of Lori. Dean retired, so the job went to him. Lori took over more of the household earnings” (N5). “Matt buys meat products, because he was in that business. This began when he retired five years ago” (M18). “Daily routine changed, and a different job caused it” (U4nyc26). “It used to be that Amy would shop, but it became Blake when Amy started working nights” (V11).

As previously noted, some teenagers became active participants in grocery shopping when they gained increased mobility: “The kids have more responsibility. They got older and could drive. It changed when they each got their licenses” (S4nyc32).

Another factor that precipitated a change in who did the food shopping was physical stress or illness in the major shopper. Although, quite often, the change was temporary, and the usual routine was resumed upon recovery. “When Angie was pregnant, Kurt would do the shopping. It changed the five times Angie was pregnant” (O3). “Kelly had surgery and couldn’t work for two months. Tom took over the shopping with Jen’s [their daughter’s] help” (F6). “Diane did food shopping alone when Donna was sick. Food shopping was

assigned by discussion when Donna was sick, otherwise she always just did it” (X3). “When I had cancer, your dad shopped” (G18).

Another occasion for a temporary change in grocery-shopping duties was when the primary shopper was away for an extended period of time. “When Lora goes on a vacation to see her family (mom, siblings) in England, Don and Steve take more responsibility. Don has to plan when we should go shopping” (H5). “When I am out of the country, my daughter and her father go food shopping together” (M15).

At times, a change was precipitated by emotional stress: “It changed by me screaming that I wasn’t going to do all the work” (N5). “When my son moved in with his father [the shopping changed]. Until that happened I made some effort to make sure there was food in the house. After that, it seemed pointless to make the effort” [despite two daughters still living with the mother] (Z11).

“Yeah, definitely it’s a conflict...” (H12nyc91)

A certain amount of conflict about food shopping was noted by *HMP* respondents. Some disagreed about what foods or kinds of food to buy: “Sometimes your sisters insist on wanting a lot of junk food. Although we don’t control it, your mother prevents them from buying a lot of junk food. For that reason it causes arguments. Your sisters obviously get upset when your mother says she ‘accidentally’ forgot to buy Twinkies and cupcakes” (H12nyc91). “After watching *SuperSize Me*, we changed our diet; more vegetables and home-cooked meals. There’s definitely more cooking and baking, and more shopping trips. There’s also more disagreement in the supermarket about what’s for dinner” (J3nyc79). “If Barb goes with other members of the household, they stuff the cart with junk food and complain about not getting it” (M10). “Dean does the most shopping. There’s conflict only because I [Lori] am constantly saying, ‘Why did you buy this? Why didn’t you buy that?’” (N5).

Others argued about who should or would do the shopping: “The kids would like me to do the shopping, but I do not like shopping, long lines in stores” (J10). Now it is [a disagreement], because my mother works full time now, and it still remains her responsibility” (J11). “Eva complains that Leon doesn’t do enough food shopping. Meanwhile, she is also forced to cook and clean...” (T3nyc29). “It’s felt as a conflict

because nobody else does this job, and when Barb gets tired and sick, it still has to be done” (M10). “Kim [the daughter] feels forced into doing the shopping, but Ginny says she no longer has the time or energy for it” (Z11).

Tension around grocery shopping was also evident in reports that, at times, this activity conflicted with work duties or hours. “Yeah, definitely it’s a conflict. I always have to worry about what’s missing in the house, or what I’m going to cook for dinner, or what groceries I have to buy when I get off work. Who wants to worry about work, and then get off work to have to worry about how I’m going to feed my family, or what groceries to buy?” (H12nyc91). “Meals affect my mother’s workday, because she has to plan what to cook for all of us, then go buy it, on top of working a job. My mother says it’s more of a stress-related feeling. It doesn’t affect my dad because he doesn’t prepare or plan or shop for our household meals” (Q3). “It only affects Rosa because she has to cut her work days short on weekdays, so she can cook for her family. It’s a conflict because she would like to work longer hours” (S10nyc34). “Sonia tries to schedule her shopping as well as household duties around her work and school schedules, which, at times, becomes difficult. She is a full-time student, employed full time, as well as a full-time mother/wife. It becomes difficult to juggle all the tasks without being extremely tired” (V4). “Meals were planned better, healthier, and cheaper when Mom was not working full time. Now, she is too busy with the world to take time to prepare healthy meals, to organize and complete shopping lists and cut coupons. It’s felt as a conflict because work takes up a lot of time. Housework comes second” (X3).

“No one else has ever complained” (O3)

A lack of conflict about food shopping in some respondent households was also reported. The primary reason seemed to be that the shopping arrangements were familiar and habitual for family members, and no one expressed discomfort or distress. “Mother usually decides. That way, everyone agrees and is satisfied with her selection” (H11nyc90). “It isn’t a source of disagreement because she’s the primary person that handles the money to pay bills and buy groceries and other things of the sort” (X20nyc98). “Alex understands that there isn’t much money around because he is a pastor. So he tries to argue as least as possible” (M17). “According to both Vicki and Marc, there are no complications in the arrangement. It’s convenient and enjoyable” (N4nj3). “It’s for both people, and they are

related, so there is no disagreements” (H13nyc92). “It was an agreement, and it just seems to be working” (N7). “It is never discussed, because Sonia just does it, and is accustomed to doing so, as is the rest of the family” [Note that this respondent reported that she felt overwhelmed by her numerous responsibilities as full-time employee, student, mother, and wife---see quote above. But she apparently made a distinction between her own internal conflict from stress versus the absence of more public conflict between family members.] (V4). “Everyone kind of knows their roles in the family, so it doesn’t become a source of disagreement” (Q3). “Everyone usually expects me to do it, and it has become routine” (R3nyc35). “It just works that way. Why fix something that isn’t broken?” (W4).

Feelings about shopping

Just as respondents’ feelings about cooking were divided—some enjoyed it, but most said they did not—so, they reported a similar range of feelings about grocery shopping. As previously, in some households, the two principal householders each felt quite differently about this task.

“She loves to be present when food shopping is done...” (A4nyc63)

Some enjoyed the experience of shopping: “When I (Bruce) shop, I am in one of my elements. I enjoy food shopping as much as preparation. It provides me with the ideas I’ll use in the preparation of my meals” (G8). “I like to food shop” (U5). “Sarah loves to shop, whether it’s for food or clothing” (D7nyc70). “Lora likes to go food shopping because she has to buy food, because the family needs to eat, and this is her job” (H5). “Sophia prefers to grocery shop, instead of cooking” (C4).

Others found the acquisition of food, in particular, to be a source of pleasure: “Food shopping is my favorite type of shopping. I love being able to stock the fridge. This is something I couldn’t do when I lived with my mother. ...There was never any good food. Now that I have my own house, I love to stock up” (G13). “I like food shopping. I like to maintain my refrigerator full” (H4nyc85). “I like food shopping because I like to have the things that I need at home to cook” (K9nyc77).

Some expressed satisfaction about skillful money management: “Emily loves to go food shopping because she likes getting great bargains” (J9nyc82). “I enjoy clipping

coupons and getting the food and stuff” (V11). While others said they enjoyed the freedom to buy whatever food they wanted: “I enjoy it [food shopping] because it’s the only money I don’t think very hard about spending before I spend it” (N5). “I’ve grown up hungry, so I spare little expense with food. You can’t even think if you don’t eat” (M13). “Leela gets to treat herself to something special” (K7).

A few respondents appreciated shopping for groceries as a chance to go out: “Yes, I enjoy it, because it is an opportunity to get out of the house” (M11nyc58). “Yes! Food shopping gets me out of the house” (K5nyc75).

For others, the enjoyment was conditional; shopping was said to be a pleasure only under the right circumstances: “She looks forward to food shopping because she knows what she wants and doesn’t spend too much time in the crowded supermarket” (U8nyc28). “Only when it’s not crowded at the supermarket and I can use coupons” (M9nyc57). “Depends on the day. It can be fun when I have a new recipe or something. Sometimes it’s just annoying” (G18). “My mom doesn’t look forward to food shopping until she’s actually in the store. Because being there, as opposed to continuously thinking about having to go, is one step closer to the task being completed” (M4). “Sometimes she thinks it’s like a mission. She has to get the different food items and make sure nothing is overlooked. Yet, it can also get tiresome” (O5). “Sometimes it can be an escape from the house, but it can be stressful” (X17).

“I hate shopping” (S5)

Most respondents, ranging from those who did it the most often to those who never shopped, reported that they disliked shopping for food. “Ellen doesn’t like to shop for food at all. She hates food stores” (J10). “It ain’t fun!” (C5). “Really, who enjoys food shopping? She does it because it’s a necessity and part of her responsibility” (G16nj5). “Ginny just doesn’t like to shop” (Z11). “She hates doing it” (M3). “Food shopping? I hate it and despise it” (G17nyc95).

Many focused their distaste on the length of time it took to do the grocery shopping: “She doesn’t like to shop at all, because it takes too much time...” (T11). “Too time-consuming” (M12). “Julia doesn’t look forward to shopping because it takes too much time” (Z6). “I don’t like food shopping. I don’t have the patience to wait in the line” (D5nyc69).

“No, it’s tedious” (H7nyc86). “Dread it. In fact, it’s a lot of work, physically tiring, boring, etc. I hate lines. It is, therefore, very aggravating and expensive” (F10). “This is a big burden for Sherry” (J11). “It’s tiring” (R3nyc35). “She doesn’t really look forward to food shopping, only because she doesn’t like standing on long lines” (V4). “It’s annoying” (W5nyc60). “My least favorite thing to do” (X4). Too much hassle” (Q4nyc45). “It’s a hassle, not my favorite thing to do. The long lines can get aggravating” (N3nj2). “It’s boring, and she usually does food shopping after a tiring day” (T3nyc29). “Only for a special occasion, but not regularly, because it’s boring and a chore” (T12). “I don’t like shopping for food because I have no preferences, and Gita takes very long to pick out food” (F9). “It’s a pain in the ass” (L3).

For others, crowded supermarkets were the touch point of their shopping aversion: “Betty really does not like food shopping, because she has to worry...whether the supermarket will be crowded” (G5). “It’s a pain in the neck. I go early to avoid the crowd” (X3). “Shopping is more of a chore, not something I look forward to because it’s always crowded in stores and chaotic” (Z4nyc2). “Don’t particularly like the supermarkets. They’re overcrowded and under-stocked. It’s a chore” (S3). “Maria works in a supermarket, hates shopping in them” (V3nyc22).

Varied feelings

When both principal householders responded to *HMP* questions about food shopping, they sometimes expressed quite opposite feelings: Beth: “I hate shopping. It’s a menial chore.” Tessa: “I like shopping with Beth, so we can hang out” (G15). Becky: “I like to shop, but by myself. More can be accomplished. It’s my form of therapy, because I can walk aimlessly at my own pace.” Art: “I don’t like to shop at all. It’s a pain in the ass” [He goes with Becky, but doesn’t regard himself as “shopping”] (U4nyc26). Maeve: “I like to organize the coupons.” Jon: “I just see shopping as a chore” (M13). Tammy: “I enjoy shopping.” Herb: “I mind because it’s more money out my pocket” (F8nyc78). “Dad doesn’t care so much for food shopping; Mom does. This kind of comes down to very primitive stereotyping... Males don’t care for shopping, females do” (J7).

PUTTING GROCERIES AWAY

After the shopping has been done, putting the groceries away in a refrigerator/freezer, pantry, or other storage spot is a frequent food-related chore in many households. The quantitative evidence about putting groceries away indicated that while this task was handled mostly by female PHs, a significant percentage (23%) of them fell into the lesser-frequency categories and sometimes, seldom, or never put away the new acquisitions. As more than half of male PHs (56%) also said that they never put away groceries, it seemed likely that the chore was frequently carried out by other household members. This likelihood was confirmed by respondents' remarks, and it is visible in the nuances of how the chore is done, by whom, and why that are set forth in this section.

Overall, the particulars of who put the groceries away in respondent households seemed to be less intensively related to gender norms—i.e., traditional female roles and expectations of self and by others—than were other food chores, such as meal production and shopping. Although, as previously mentioned, women clearly did most of the putting away, and the traditional ascription of domestic food work to women was cited by a few: “Tammy packs it [groceries] away. Just ‘old school’ raising” (F8nyc78). “Tara is the female. Bob has the traditional view on household chores” [meanwhile, he works as a chef] (R13nyc44). “Karen puts away food by herself because she has always been the one who did housework” (O6nc46). For these respondents, putting away groceries was a one-person chore that was clearly related to their role in the household. For others, the same responsibility also was fulfilled by one person but for different reasons.

“I put food away by myself, usually... I know where everything goes” (U5)

The rationale most often associated with responsibility for storing food purchases was control. In many cases, the primary cook preferred to put things away as a solo activity to save time, maintain an established organizational scheme, and so she or he would be able to find ingredients and materials later, when needed. (In some instances, respondents' remarks were identical. These quotes are cited once, followed by multiple *HMP* household codes.)

Some respondents mentioned skill and efficiency as their reason for doing this chore: “Christine puts away the food by herself, because she feels that she can do it most efficiently” (C7nyc72). “Maura is generally more adept at this task” (F7).

For many others, organization was the major theme: “Well, she likes to put food away by herself, because she knows exactly where everything goes” (G5). “...I know where everything goes” (D5nyc69, Q3). “He likes to put the food items in certain cabinets and places” (J4nyc80). “Rosa likes to put food items away by herself, because she says others get in her way, or that they stuff the food wherever they like, and not where it belongs. She does it in a particular order” (S10nyc34). “My mother puts away the groceries because she has the cabinets arranged a certain way” (X20nyc98). “If others are home when I come home, or someone came with me to the store, they’ll help bring the stuff in the house. But I like to put the stuff away by myself, because I can keep everything organized” (G18). Maeve: “I put them away. I like to arrange things a certain way. I’m better at organizing.” Jon: “She’s OCD with the food” (M13). “I like to put away items by myself!!!! I’m very picky about where things go and cannot stand a messy pantry or fridge” (G13).

Some respondents stated that they preferred to put away the groceries to avoid future confusion when cooking. “Put food away by myself, so I know where everything is” (G4nyc93, G14, H6, M6nyc54, M9nyc57, R5, V11). “Puts away alone. Since Shannon cooks, she likes to know where everything is for herself, so she knows when it’s time to cook” (H9nyc88). “She knows where everything is, and it’s faster for her to find it while cooking” (M11nyc58). “I have my own way of arranging them and often keep the food that will be eaten or prepared very soon in front or on top of everything else” (T4nyc30). “Things are organized for her cooking style” (A5). “Penny puts items away by herself, so she knows where it is” (G6). “Dean does it crummy, and I prefer to know what he bought, because if I’m cooking, I want to know where it is” (N5).

A few said that working alone to put away groceries actually minimized conflict in their households. “Lori likes to put food items away by herself because that way there are no fights or disagreements” (N5). “Teri puts items away by herself because she feels people would be in the way” (U8nyc28). “I put them away myself. Otherwise, the kitchen gets too cluttered” (V3nyc22).

Putting groceries away together

As with food preparation and shopping, many respondents said they liked to work with other household members to put their food purchases away. Some remarks indicated

variation in who did this chore: “Sarah doesn’t mind putting food items away by herself, but if others are present and want to help, that’s fine, too” (D7nyc70). “Usually Tara puts away the food. Bob helps once in a while” (R13nyc44). “Ikem helps if he wants to, but for Ivie it’s a responsibility” (K3nyc68). “Once in a while when my daughter’s here she’ll help put groceries away” (G22).

“Barb prefers that others would help her out” (M10)

The factors most often cited in favor of having more than one person put away groceries included speed—the task went faster with more people involved, companionship, and the feeling that sharing this chore helped to balance effort and responsibility between household members, especially if the shopping was usually done by one person.

“With others because it goes faster” (N7)

Many said that having others’ help was key to getting the chore done quickly. “Put away with others. It’s faster” (G4nyc93). “I like to put away with others. More hands equals less time to accomplish the task” (G8). “With others, because [putting away groceries] is a chore I don’t like and with help it goes faster!” (G10). “Sonia would rather put food away with others because it generally expedites the process” (V4). “Makes it easier to put food items away with others” (G19). “Doing it with others keeps the food organized and put away quickly” (F3).

In some households, working together to put away groceries offered an opportunity for social interchange: “I like to put things away with others. There’s more help and more conversation” (M14). “Tanya said she would prefer to put food away with others because this way she can have a conversation and put food away at the same time. Makes this task less dreadful” (Z4nyc2). “Ginny likes to have company when doing this” (Z11).

“Because I shop for it, everyone else should put it away” (R3nyc35)

Quite a number of respondents thought that having multiple people involved in putting away groceries was a way to lessen the burden of responsibility for supplying the household. “Nina would prefer to have us help put the food away, as she has usually just finished the shopping and bringing in the groceries alone and well could use the help putting

it away” (E4ga1). “I want to put things away with others. It’s too much work” (L3). “If I do the shopping, other family members can participate in putting it away” (F10). “Everyone should pitch in when groceries come home” (N4nj2). “Rita has the male members of the family do it for her. She feels that if she went and did the shopping, then she shouldn’t have to put it away” (R3nyc35). “Eva does a lot of food chores on her own and expects help with putting food away” (T3nyc29). “When someone brings food home from the stores, unless they’re extremely busy or will be late for work, all of us will put food away, or at least one other person will help out” (G9). “Sunny loves a helping hand” (M17). “I like it when people help me, because it feels like I’m being helped” (G22). “Hyunmi expects her daughters to help her out when there is a lot of grocery to be put away” (O5). “Mother shops and daughter puts it away as part of sharing chores” (M7nyc55). “We all put away items as a shared responsibility. It’s just right to do it that way” (S3). “Putting away groceries has always been an entire group effort” (S3). Becky: “Family involvement is important.” Art: “I want to do it with others because I always do it wrong the first time” (U4nyc26). “Marisa likes for me to put the food on the washing machine, then she puts it away” (X20nyc98). “My dad and I do it together, so we both know where things are” (Y3). “They help, so that everyone in the house knows where everything is at” (W4).

In a few households with multiple shoppers, food items are put away by the purchaser: “My son does all the fill-in shopping for odds and ends... He does put his own groceries away” (F4). “They go shopping together, and Diana puts away most of the groceries, but Sam puts away what is solely his, like his juices for work” (K9nyc77). “Whoever buys things puts them away” (T12).

“The kids help put away groceries” (T4nyc30)

The following section supplies solid confirmation of indications in the quantitative data that children, teenagers, and adult offspring were regularly involved in the chore of putting groceries away. Quite a number of respondents said that responsibility for putting groceries away was given to their children, particularly girls, as part of their domestic training. Children often began helping with this chore when quite young. “Parvathi likes her children to help her put the food away so they can learn where everything goes, and it’s one way to teach them to put things away” (G16nj5). “Alana has to help put away groceries after

shopping. She does this to help out and learn responsibility” (K10). “Putting away groceries is...regularly done by the kids. They helped me even when they were little. I would give them little things to put away, like napkins” (S4nyc32). “All the kids helped to put groceries away from about age four” (R3nyc35). “Putting the groceries away began at age four” (J5nyc81). “When they were old enough, around six or seven, [the kids] always helped put away what they could” (J7). “Putting groceries away has been a responsibility since both girls were about eight” (G19). “At about 10 years old, the children put the groceries away” (H14nj4). “The kids [do it] because they have the most energy, and they’re usually sitting around doing nothing. At around 14 each child is told that they have to start helping around the house, and that involves...putting away groceries” (T11). “Your sisters usually help your mother in putting the groceries away. They actually know where most things go” (H12nyc91). “The mother shops, and the daughter puts it away as part of sharing chores” (M7nyc55).

In some households, gender was noted as a differentiating factor in how or if the younger members were involved. “Rick is usually pretty lazy and will not always do what he is told. Not necessarily because he’s being disrespectful, just because it’s not a very high priority for him. And, as most males treat low-priority things, he forgets that he was told to do whichever” (J7). “It’s not looked at as extremely important. Especially males do not participate” (X4).

Male non-involvement

As with all of the other food-related chores examined in this study, a sizeable proportion of male PHs were reported not to be involved at all in putting food away. Again, various reasons were cited. Lack of time and specialized knowledge were the reasons most commonly given for men’s non-involvement in this chore. “Ron is not usually home when food items are being put away” (C3nyc71). “Put food away? Not at all. Really, it’s because I hardly know where your mother chooses to store specific food items. I stored the groceries once, and your mother almost had a panic attack, because she couldn’t find some of the groceries she needed and that she had bought” (H12nyc91). “Put food away? Not at all, because I don’t shop” (S5). “Dean does it crummy. I prefer to know what he bought, and if I’m cooking I want to know where it is” (N5). “Not my job/territory” was also a frequent

response: “Put items away? Not at all; that’s Jean’s job” (C5). “Leon stays out of the kitchen” (T3nyc29).

“It is a lot of work for just one person to do” (J11)

Aside from issues arising from organizational conflict, the most often-voiced problem associated with putting groceries away had to do with a lack of help in carrying out this chore. “My mom prefers assistance when putting away grocery items, but she tends to find herself to be the one who mainly puts them away. Assistance would greatly speed up the process, though” (M4). “I like to let others carry it in, and put items away with others. Doesn’t happen very often” (M5). “My mother says that she would have loved it if we helped, but school and other activities interfere. We don’t usually participate in any food-related chores” (Q3). “Rita struggles to get Deshawn to help out. Cole does not discipline his child to do any work. And, since Rita is not Deshawn’s real mother, she does not feel comfortable telling him” (P3). “I usually put food away by myself, because everyone else usually gets away” (G21nyc97). “I deal with the groceries at the store, choosing and bagging them. And I handle it all again when cooking. But I’m not the only person who eats! Why can’t someone else put the stuff away? So I leave a lot of it in bags until somebody notices, if ever” (O2). “I want help putting things away, because I get tired of tripping over them in the hall” (F4). “They don’t help at all, because of laziness” (M8nyc56).

While none of the respondents’ remarks indicated that they felt pleasure from putting away groceries, a number did say that they disliked the task—some intensely: “Hate it!” (F10). “Doesn’t like putting away food at all, because she hates the job” (M3). “I don’t like it at all, because it feels like a chore” (T12). “I don’t like putting groceries away. It’s my least favorite part” (U7). “I hate the packing and unpacking” (G17nyc95).

CLEARING AFTER MEALS AND WASHING DISHES

The frequency analysis of *HMP* responses showed that responsibility for clearing away used dishes, cutlery, and other utensils after the household’s main meal, plus packaging any leftovers, and washing dishes and cookware was more evenly distributed among household members than other food chores. That said, it must be noted that female PHs again predominated in this chore.

“Rita feels she’ll do a better job than anyone else” (P3)

As with meal preparation and shopping, some women took sole responsibility for clearing and washing dishes because they felt that their work reflected superior skills and standards. (It should be understood that these remarks refer only to kitchen-based cleaning, not to more general housecleaning.) “Christine cleans up by herself because she feels that she does it best” (G18). “She cleans in her own way, and she believes her way is best since she is there all the time” (M11nyc58). “I’d rather do it myself, so I’m sure everything gets clean” (G18). “When it’s done by Rosa, she knows everything is clean and in order” (S10nyc34). “I’m a perfectionist and I get things done best” (U4nyc26). “I believe I have a little bit of OCD [obsessive-compulsive disorder] when it comes to cleaning. For example, I completely clean out my fridge every week before shopping and all appliances get cleaned at least once a month” (G13). “I do it well [cleaning], and I do not complain” (G8). “I have no other choice. I like everything clean, therefore, I would clean up anyway” (D5nyc69).

However, it was clear that high standards for cleanliness were gender-neutral, as shown in testimony from a single-father household: “My father likes best to clean up after the meal alone. He’s a cleaning maniac. He spends as much time, if not more, cleaning after the meal than actually preparing it. He’s never happy. It takes a long time for him to satisfy his cleaning standards” (Y18nyc11).

“I get it done quicker alone” (K5nyc75)

Speed and lack of room in the kitchen were also cited as reasons that some female PHs took on solo cleanup duties: “Most times I just want to get it done—‘get out of my way’ attitude” (X3). “I’d rather do all the clearing by myself, because one person does it faster than two, especially if you have a small kitchen” (D5nyc69). “I clean up by myself because I like my space when doing things like that” (N4nj3). “My kitchen’s small. It’s easier by myself” (M14). “Others crowd the kitchen” (Y3). “She cleans up by herself so she can do it fast” (X20nyc98).

Interestingly, speeding the process of post-meal cleanup was cited as desirable both by those who preferred to do the chore alone and those who preferred help (see details in a

subsequent section). However it could be achieved, respondents wanted to maximize their efficiency and minimize the time spent on this task.

“...I do it because I have to” (U5)

Some women said that they handled post-meal cleanup alone because no one else made an effort to help or the others were too busy. The clear implication was that this chore fell to the female PH by default. “I don’t like cleaning up, but, just like for cooking, because no one else will do it, I have to” (T4nyc30). “I clean up after meals by myself, because nobody else helps” (G21nyc97). “I clean up myself. No one else wants to” (G8). “I never enjoy cleaning, but I do it because I have to” (U5). “I feel like I do just about all of the cleaning myself. Everyone is so busy. But I’m busy, too” (G18). “Nobody usually wants to take the responsibility of cleaning up, because everyone is always too tired. Usually, your mother ends up cleaning up” (H12nyc91).

This solo effort was sometimes done as a way of facilitating other household members’ activities. Working alone on cleanup gave others more time for other things. “My mother says that she would have loved it if we helped, but school and other activities interfere” (Q3). “Karen cleans up by herself, because everyone else has work to attend to” (O6nyc46). “My mom doesn’t look forward to cleanup, but she realizes it must be done, because my dad, brother, and myself all get home late. We’re willing to help out, but, as a favor to us, she says she’ll take care of it” (M4).

A few respondents reported that each person cleared away and washed her/his own dishes. Reasons given included different schedules: “We’re home at different times and finish at different times” (V12nyc25); and adherence to a philosophy of self-sufficiency: “Everyone cleans up because it’s a self-serve household” (M16).

“We have a sense of shared responsibility” (S3)

In some households, post-meal chores were clearly understood to be a shared activity. “Cleanup is a shared responsibility among our family members” (J11). “Washing dishes is a shared responsibility of all family members” (D7nyc70). “We like to share the cleaning up” (M13). “Everyone helps after the meal” (R3nyc35). “We clear with each other because it’s not fair for one person to clean up all the time” (W4).

“...The process gets done quickly when there is help from others” (G5)

Many respondents indicated that cleanup after the main meal was a group effort in their households. As might be expected, getting the chore done swiftly and having less work for each person to do were cited as major benefits to including more participants in the process. “Sarah likes to clean up after meals with others to move it along faster” (D7nyc70). “With others, it seems like less work” (G12nyc94). “Parvathi takes all and any help she can get by anybody willing to lend a hand” (G16nj5). “Sonia would rather have others assist with cleaning up after dinner because it makes the task somewhat easier” (V4). “Tasks can be assigned to each individual” (G5). “I like to clean up with others so more gets done, and people help out more” (M10). “It’s quicker if everyone helps rather than if all the meal cleanup is left for me to do” (Q3). “Cleaning up is usually annoying and boring, and everybody working makes the work go by quickly” (G3). “I want others to help with the work so more time can be spent with family or watching TV and resting” (X17).

Some said that working with others to clean up was a social opportunity—a chance for household members to spend time together. “It’s faster and easier to do it with others, and we talk while we work” (F10). “Ginny likes to talk to her girls while cleaning up” (Z11). “Julia and Gaston both said they have come to enjoy cleaning together after their children left home” (Z6).

“I need a break, or at least help with cleaning up” (T3nyc29)

Several respondents who were the main cooks in their households said that others should participate in after-meal cleanup as a way to balance the workload. “She feels everyone should pitch in and help out” (T12). “Since I cooked, someone else can help clean” (H9nyc88). “When I clean up by myself, it’s not by choice” (G12nyc94). “After doing all the cooking, you want some help” (M6nyc54). “I want the others to help, because it’s hard work to do alone” (V11). “Monica cooks and serves, so she expects others to help clean up after they eat” (G13).

Some said that help was available only infrequently and expressed a bit of frustration about it: “Cleaning up with others would be dandy, although it’s usually not available” (G22). “It’s always nice to have help when you’re doing unrewarding jobs” (R5). “Mom

tends to do the majority of cleaning by herself, but would greatly welcome help to speed up the process” (M4). “People help when there are family gatherings. Otherwise, it’s just me” (M9nyc57). “When they’re alone, Tara cleans up most of the time. Rarely, Bob does it. When they’re with family and friends, then she gets help cleaning up” (R13nyc44). “Sunny loves when her family helps her clean. She gets really tired after a long day of work. But as long as there are no dishes to wash... She knows it is Korean tradition for the husband not to do that much, so she should be grateful” (M17).

“They eat, they can clean” (G15)

Some cooks expressed the feeling that, having prepared the main meal, they should not have to clear afterward. “I don’t want to do it at all. Because if I cook, I shouldn’t have to clean” (U4nyc26). “I cooked. I see no reason why I should also clean up” (V3nyc22). “I did everything else. Cleaning is someone else’s job!” (N3nj2). “If Maura has prepared the meal, she expects another family member to reciprocate the favor by clearing it away” (F7). “I have him clean. He should at least do something. I want to watch him slave for a bit” (H6).

“I make the children clean up” (K4nyc74)

Again, as with putting groceries away, cleaning after meals was allotted to the younger members in many households. This task was assigned for a variety of reasons, including provision of help to the main food preparer and to train children and teens, particularly girls, in household chores. “Emily prefers that the kids clean up after dinner is over” (J9nyc82). “Hyunmi assigned her daughters to clean up, so they can chip in with the housework. Especially, she has given this task to her eldest daughter to make sure she gets used to doing house chores” (O5). “Alana usually helps clean up after dinner. She does this to help out and learn responsibility” (K10). “Occasionally, my daughter will help with the cleanup because she gets up and she does it” (G22). “The daughter is expected to do the dishes...” (M17). “Len does the dishes. Ever since he was old enough, this has been his responsibility” (J10). “Tor cleans the table sometimes, and also sets it sometimes. It’s important for him to know the importance of helping out at home” (H10nyc89). “Nora believes whenever she has to cook, the responsibilities of setting the table, cleaning up, and dish washing are left to those who did not cook, which is usually the kids. She prefers not to

clean up after the meals if the kids are unoccupied or occupied with unimportant matters” (A4nyc63). “Each week, the three kids alternate, and whoever’s week it is has to clean the entire kitchen, including washing the dishes...and cleaning the table and floor. They have these responsibilities because it’s their house, too” (T11). “The kids set up the table and wash dishes, because they are part of the family and have to be involved” (W6nyc61). “My chore is to wash dishes after dinner. I have this responsibility because it’s mandated by my parent” (X20nyc98).

One set of parents detailed both the theory and practice of their kids’ involvement in food chores. Becky: “If one person cooks, the other person cleans up. If one person sets, the other person clears, and so forth. It builds character and responsibility.” Art: “This is far and few between. Sometimes we’ll get the dishes done, and sometimes we’ll get a table set. Most of the time, they’re just brats” (U4nyc26). Other parents offered a gendered analysis of their children’s participation: “Kylie will set the table and clean, and Rick will have similar responsibility, but Kylie is just more diligent at actually carrying her chores out. Rick will most of the time sit on his lazy butt” (J7).

Feelings about post-meal cleanup

While a few respondents said they felt positive about the process of making the kitchen tidy after their households’ meals, mostly because their intense satisfaction at the resulting cleanliness and order justified the grungy effort of cleaning up, most of the comments on this subject clearly stated that clearing away food and dealing with dirty dishes and pans was disliked, even detested.

“He hates a messy kitchen” (N4nj3)

“My father has a “cleaning fetish,” meaning that having a mess around drives him crazy. Therefore, he claims that having cleaned up makes him feel good” (Y18nyc11). “Hallie considers herself a clean freak” (M5nyc55). “Meg is a clean-freak” (W5nyc60). “I like to maintain my kitchen nice and clean, so I do look forward to cleaning up” (H4nyc85). “I like an organized and clean house” (K9nyc77). “Lora likes to clean because she wants to see a clean house” (H5). Jon: “I don’t look forward to cleaning, but I like a clean kitchen.” Maeve: “If it’s messy in here, I don’t like being here, so I always keep it clean” (M13).

Even the process of cleanup was seen in a positive light by a few respondents: Becky: “I like cleaning. There’s no thought involved” (U4nyc26). “I find cleaning and washing dishes a stress reliever” (M12). Shane: “Sometimes I enjoy mundane, simple, manual labor” (Y4).

“I want a maid!” (M3)

Many respondents were eloquent about their distaste for clearing and washing up: “It’s a messy, long tedious, boring job!” (V11). “I don’t think anybody looks forward to cleaning up” (O3). “Cleaning up is about as much fun as sitting on a hot stove. They’re both pains in the ass” (J7). “I like making the mess, but I don’t like cleaning up” (M6nyc54). “I don’t like the greasy water and the splashing, and wiping up and putting away of things” (N5). “I hate to do dishes” (F3). “It’s a pain in the neck” (M5). “It’s just another chore” (G10). Mellie: “I intensely dislike cleaning up after meals because I’m lazy after cooking” (Y4). “It’s boring, and I hate dirty dishes” (C4). “Parvathi dreads that part of the meal” (G16nj5). “I almost always have to clean up after everyone else, and I have to cook, so it’s tiring” (M10). “I really don’t prefer cleaning up only because there’s usually a lot of cleaning up to do” (V4). “It’s very time-consuming and tiring for her, as it includes tasks such as cleaning the stove, washing used dishes, and putting the food away” (G5). “Who looks forward to cleaning up a mess in the kitchen?” (Y3). “It’s a chore because we don’t have a maid to do it for us” (S3). “Penny likes others to clean up because it’s not a fun chore” (G6). “Susan is a housekeeper, and she doesn’t like to continue work at home” (H7nyc86). “Not at all! I want someone to clean after me!” (J6). Ram: “The few times I do it, I don’t enjoy it. It’s annoying” (F9). Art: “I don’t want to touch other people’s garbage!” (U4nyc26).

The lack of help from others was a theme sounded by several respondents. “It can get very messy at times, and nobody is there to help me. I usually spend all morning cleaning after everyone” (O6nyc46). “Nine times out of ten, my mom is the only one who cleans the dishes or clears the table. Occasionally, my dad will help, but that’s rare” (Q3). “I don’t mind preparing the food. I’m happy to do it if guests are around. But it’s not that fun when it’s just for Bob and me, because I end up cleaning up after him. He never cleans up and I

tend to get frustrated sometimes” (R13nyc44). “I usually clean up alone, and it’s just boring” (G18). “I have little help when it comes to cleaning up” (Z11).

Some opined that they would rather do other activities than clear and wash after meals: “It is a necessity, but it’s too time-consuming when I could be doing other things” (T12). “It takes time away from other things” (O9). “Sometimes I’m tired or have other pending work, so cleaning up feels like a drag” (O5). “I like to not clean up after meals. I’d rather do something else” (N5). “After we eat, I just want to go to bed and watch TV” (X3). “I’d prefer to relax after dinner” (X17).

Conflict about cleanup

While *HMP* participants reported a handful of instances of conflict about this aspect of food chores in their households, the number was surprisingly small in relation to the high level of distaste that was expressed. As seen previously, lack of help was a disturbing factor: “The only real conflict is that I feel like I do just about all of the cleaning myself” (G18). “It’s always a struggle to get Deshawn to help out with anything” (P3). “About once a week, Tom ‘manages’ to help with the cleanup” (X17). “Andy will sometimes help clear the table if Ellen complains enough” (J10).

Timing was another sore point: “Linc’s food has to be kept warm in the microwave until he comes home from the third shift. This is a conflict because it causes cleanup to be late at night” (X20nyc98).

Some of the comments showed that while cleanup was disliked, it was also recognized to be a necessary activity and done anyway. “Cleaning up is a lot of work, but it is something that has to be done” (D7nyc70). “I don’t like cleaning up, but I have to do it” (T4nyc30). “This is a big burden for Sherry” (J11). “No one looks forward to cleaning up, but everyone has to” (Q4nyc45). As these remarks hint, the belief that post-meal cleanup is necessary probably serves to dampen conflict about how these chores are done and who does them.

GARBAGE HANDLING

Dealing with kitchen and household trash generally has been stereotyped as a man’s chore, and the quantitative evidence from *HMP* households detailed in Chapter Three shows

that, indeed, men were more likely than women to have garbage duty. Particularly in dual-gender households, men dominated this chore, with almost four-fifths (79%) of male PHs holding some responsibility for garbage handling. It is interesting to note, however, that in those same dual-gender households, 56% of women also took care of garbage, indicating that the chore was shared among household members at a significantly high rate. The large percentages of men (20%) and women (40%) among all respondent households who reported that they never dealt with garbage also indicates that other household members—children, teens, and young adults—often were involved. As mentioned previously, garbage detail proved to be less gender-associated than the other food chores considered here.

Testimony from *HMP* respondents sheds some light on the details of “how” and “why” this chore has such a complicated profile.

“Mom has her own set of things she does, and so does Dad” (O4)

Some households reported a division of labor in which the female PH did everything but garbage, while the male PH was responsible only for dealing with the trash. “I start cooking at seven p.m. After dinner, I clean up...and wash the dishes. Zahir takes out the garbage. It’s a generally accepted responsibility” (T4nyc30). “Myung would take out the trash, while Hyunmi cleaned the dishes” (O5). “It’s strictly Tony’s chore” (L3). “In the beginning it was assigned as his chore, but now it’s just accepted as something Tom ought to do” (X17). “Barb cooks and Mike helps out by carrying garbage out, like man chores” (M10).

Some women saw it as a somewhat-minimal *quid pro quo*: “Because I cook, taking out the garbage is the least he could do” (H6). “Since my dad and brother don’t do much else around the house, they can at least take out the garbage” (Q3). “Since I do the cooking and stuff, the boys have to help, and they know garbage is their job” (S4nyc32).

A few respondents said the responsibility for garbage processing was seen as a way for the male PH to participate in domestic work, and that it was done voluntarily. “I [Alex] fully understand that chores should be shared. I don’t mind sharing the household responsibilities by doing the garbage” (M17). “Once Clarence entered the household, he decided to do it. Maybe he saw it as his way of making a contribution to the household” (G5). “I like to do it. It means that I can find a way to help my wife” (M15).

Other men were “volunteered” for the chore: “I’m pretty much a dictator. I tell any of the three guys to do it” (N5). “I told Jim to do the garbage. I would beat him if he did nothing” (H6). “I’ll let it get as high as a mountain. Then, Shane will take it out” (Y4).

“It’s a man’s job to take out the garbage” (S3, S4nyc32)

Many respondents from households where the male PH or other male resident habitually dealt with the garbage identified the chore as one that was suited to a man, most particularly, the household’s primary male. “Jim’s the man. He should do garbage” (H6). “It’s something that should be done by the ‘man of the house’” (D7nyc70). “The man of the household does that chore” (M16). “Tony has always done the garbage, always will. He’s the man of the house. He should” (L3). “He is the head of the household, therefore he takes on that responsibility” (H10nyc89). “Mike is the man of the house. He takes out the trash” (M10). “Clive feels that taking care of the garbage is his responsibility innately” (F7). “Uri would never expect Tanya to carry out the garbage” (Z4nyc2). “It just happened that way, because he’s the only man in the house!” (G21nyc97). In one female-headed household, the ex-husband still handled the garbage: “Dad does it. He comes over in the mornings and does it on garbage day” (G19).

Some noted that this chore was done willingly, or at least without dissent. “Lon does it without complaining” (N19nyc73). “Scott believes garbage is something he should do, and he does it without discussion” (D7nyc70).

“The male always does the dirty stuff” (N19nyc73)

Many reasons given by respondents to account for the fact that garbage duty was carried out by men in their households focused on the physical aspects of this chore: it was said to be a “manly” task, physically taxing and located largely outside, where traditional male chores took place. “Garbage is James’s only manly chore around the house” (M16). “Damon or Liron take the cans, because they tend to be heavy and dirty, at times” (V4). “Alex didn’t want Sunny to drag the heavy garbage cans out to the street” (M17). “Bob always took out the garbage, maybe because it’s more physical” (R13nyc44). “The cans are heavy, and Blake is the biggest one in the house” (V11). “George is the more capable than Leia to do something of that nature” (N6). “Sadru just does it, because he takes care of the

outside” (G21nyc97). “My mother views garbage as outside work, so she put Jerry in charge of it” (J9nyc82). “Dan is always outside, anyway. He’s always busy doing yard work and cars; garbage goes with it. He takes care of the outside of the house. It’s what he does” (X3).

Safety was also cited as a factor: “My father thinks it’s safer for a man to take out the garbage when it’s late at night” (H14nj4). “When the garbage is taken out, it’s at night, and it’s too dark for any of the women in the house to take it out” (U8nyc28).

“She’s responsible because garbage is part of household chores” (K3nyc68)

In some households, however, garbage was mostly the female PH’s responsibility, and some degree of inevitability or naturalness was ascribed to the assignment (just as it was when men had the job). “Taking out garbage is part of housework and, therefore, primarily the woman’s concern” (K3nyc68). “Hana always does the garbage” (A7nyc54). “Ginny always does it” (Z11). “Molly just does it” (X4). “Beth takes the garbage to the street” (G15). “Your mother just chooses to do it. I believe she likes doing it. That’s why she doesn’t argue about it” (H12nyc92). “I [Marisa] am the one who carries the garbage from the kitchen to the chute” (X20nyc98). “Selina is in the kitchen all the time. She always takes the garbage to the cans” (M15). “It’s easier if I [Moira] do it, or it won’t get done!” (G14).

“It just happened that way” (G21nyc97, M12, X17, V3nyc22, W5nyc60, Z6)

In many households where garbage disposal was the male PH’s chore, the work assignment was said not to have been made deliberately but, instead, it “just happened.” As noted in previous sections, this vague reason was frequently given about responsibility for other food chores. Also, as previously, this seeming naturalness relied heavily on individuals’ expectations and pre-conceived ideas of what activities were considered to be suitable for each household member. “It just happened that way. Myung was used to picking up the garbage and throwing it out” (O5). “It just happened that way, because that’s the way it is” (J6). “It was just always like that; unwritten rule, you could say” (O4). “It just happened that way, because he’s the only man in the house!” (G21nyc97). “It just happened. I [Ben] would take the garbage out as a kid” (G13). “It just happened that way because he started taking it out” (U8nyc28). “It seems natural to do it this way” (Z11). “It just makes sense” (C4). “That’s how it’s always been” (S5).

Some male PHs indicated that the job became theirs by default, rather than by choice. “It just happened, because no one else would do it” (O9). “It just happened that way. Someone had to do it” (S3). “It just happened that way. When he did it once, it was his chore permanently. He just accepts it” (L3). “It’s tradition” (W5nyc60).

Habit was another factor that was said to underlie the allocation of garbage duty in various households: “It just happened that way, because of habit” (P3). “Well, it has become a habit and seems like a common chore of the day” (O5). “It has been like that for many years, so everyone is used to who does it” (H10nyc89). “It just happened that way, because the wife would ask Alex to take out the garbage, and then it became a habit” (M17).

“It takes help from the whole family to run a household” (F3)

In many *HMP* households, responsibility for garbage was given to the younger members, usually as training in carrying out daily chores and to distribute the workload more evenly. “When the children were younger, taking out the garbage became their primary responsibility. It was an attempt to teach them how to be organized and keep the house clean. It became ritual for them to take out the garbage every night. Now that they’re grown up, it is still their responsibility” (A3nyc62). “Each week, the three kids alternate. Whoever’s week it is has to take out the garbage. They have these responsibilities because it’s their house, too” (T11). “Usually the children’s chores include...taking out the garbage. They have these responsibilities because it’s too much work for any two or three people to do, and they’re of an age as to where they can help out around the house” (V4). “My son was given the chore that was easy: throwing out the garbage” (H11nyc90). “The parents never took out the garbage. It goes in part with helping out around the house. It’s part of house chores, where all manual labor is usually performed by the children” (O3). “Lon does that when he is home from college, and the older sister does it the other times” (N19nyc73).

In some households where the female PH tended to deal with garbage more often than others, some of the responsibility was passed along to the younger members: “I was given the responsibility by my mother” (X20). “Jerome is a little older, so he helps his mother take out the garbage. He’s starting to get some of the household chores” (R3nyc35). “Sometimes your sisters do the garbage, when your mother tells them to do it. It’s always kind of been that way” (H12nyc91). “Iris and Irene will sometimes help out. Ivie [the mom] frequently

reminds others to help with this chore” (K3nyc68). “Rosa did the garbage, then her sons became old enough to do it” (S10nyc34). “My mother did it. When Nate got older, garbage became his responsibility” (J9nyc82).

A few respondents mentioned this task as part of gender-role habituation: “When Tor became a teenager, he began to take the garbage out. He’s known as the second ‘man of the house’” (H10nyc89). “It just happened that way perhaps because they are the older two males of the house” (V4). “The father and son usually carry out the garbage” (H11nyc90). But, in most households in which younger members held responsibility for garbage disposal, the assignment seemed to be a gender-neutral one, with girls and boys both taking part.

Another factor, mentioned infrequently, was the use of trash duty as a way for kids or teenagers to earn an allowance. “Damon wanted an allowance and accepted the chores that came along with it, like taking out the garbage and recycling” (N4nj3). “Brian gets paid for taking out the garbage” (H14nj4).

“Pretty much everyone takes out the garbage” (V4)

Much more than the other food chores considered hitherto, garbage was reported to be a shared duty in many *HMP* households, with a variety of members responsible for taking trash from the kitchen to the cans or garbage chute, and then hauling loaded receptacles to the street for pickup. “Jacob [the male PH] doesn’t always do the garbage. Sometimes, Joan or Josh do it, as well, because no one was designated the responsibility. It’s mostly whoever sees it full” (T12). “Everyone takes out the trash if it has to be taken out” (V12nyc25). “There is no assignment. Garbage gets taken out by whoever is most bothered by it, or by specific request” (Y4). “No one has a problem carrying out garbage. If Dennis can’t carry it out, I’ll take it out. If I can’t, my daughter will” (G22). “Whoever is around to take it out will do it. No one has to ask anyone to do it” (W4). “We sort of trade in clean-up” (M13). “It’s a responsibility, and someone is always willing to do it” (Q4nyc45). “We all share the responsibility equally” (J11). “We all pitch in and do different chores as a family, therefore making it somewhat more balanced” (M4). “The division of labor is equal when it comes to this task” (V4).

A few respondents cited a commonly held goal—of cleanliness—as a key factor in keeping multiple participants on task: “Everyone wants the house clean” (V12nyc25).

“Everyone works together to keep the house clean, and garbage is just one of the responsibilities” (X20nyc98). “It’s something that needs to be done. No one wants the house to smell because the garbage wasn’t taken out, so they take it out” (T12).

“It was discussed...” (H13nyc92)

Again, the allocation of garbage duty was discussed among family members in more respondent households than were other chores considered in this study. “We came to it by discussion and agreement, because it made chores a lot easier, and there was less confusion about who had to do the garbage. It takes away argument” (T11). “We decided by discussion and agreement, because it worked out best” (M7nyc55). “There was a discussion, and they agreed that Pierre would take garbage cans to the street” (H13nyc92). “Whoever washes the dishes takes out the garbage. Everyone is in agreement because it is understood what they have to do” (R3nyc35). “The garbage and recycling schedule for pickup was agreed upon by discussion” (G18).

Some younger household members pointed out that their parents, not they, discussed and decided who would do what: “For Leisha, Tenielle and Liron, it’s decided by our parents, and agreed upon by them that we have to take out the garbage” (V4) “It was discussed and agreed by the parents” (G10).

Preference was another factor that weighed heavily in allocating this task. “Our preferences were discussed. Lydia doesn’t like to carry garbage out, so Wes does it” (K11). “Since Selina cooks, she cannot stand the smell of garbage” (M15). “It happened by preference and agreement. Tanya cooks, and Uri carries out the garbage” (Z4nyc2). “Most of the household does not like dealing with garbage, so my mother did it” (J9nyc82). “I [Art] don’t want to touch other people’s garbage. Becky takes it” (U4nyc26). “Jake does it, because Cara doesn’t work with garbage!” (D6). “She hates garbage, so I do it. I don’t mind, she cleans the counters” (M13). “The boys have this responsibility because their mom is afraid to take the trash out at night. It’s actually a conflict for Julio because he doesn’t like to take out the garbage” (S10nyc34).

“I’m available to do it” (G14)

Convenience and availability were significant considerations in who had charge of the garbage: “The responsibility of taking garbage out was decided according to schedule or who was available. Vera works longer hours now; that’s why taking out the garbage becomes the responsibility of other household members who are available” (A3nyc62). “Wilson comes home from work late, so he puts the garbage in the front” (R3nyc35). “The responsibility was decided by who was available to take it out” (X20nyc98). “It’s generally understood that George has more time for things like garbage” (N6). “Usually while on his way to work was the most convenient time for Tim to take the cans out to the curb” (G6).

In some instances, it was specified that garbage duty was actually a two-part process. First, the trash had to be taken from the kitchen to large receptacles that were stored outside or in a garage. Then, once or twice a week, the cans with accumulated waste were moved to the street where sanitation crews could empty them into collection trucks. For most households, the task was seen as a unitary responsibility, as noted by a respondent from one household who said that it seemed logical that the same person should carry waste from the kitchen to the garbage cans and then haul the cans out to the street. “Since Leon takes out the garbage, it’s right for him to bring the garbage to the street” (T3nyc29). For another household, it was equally logical that the chore should be split according to preference: the female PH carried trash from the kitchen to the cans: “Selina is in the kitchen all the time, [so] she always takes the garbage out. She does it naturally”; and the male PH hauled the garbage cans to the street: “She hates the smell of garbage...and I’m stronger than Selina. I [Malik] like to do it. It means that I find a way to help my wife” (M15). It should be noted, however, that for some apartment dwellers, trash disposal was a single effort: full bags were taken to the building’s central disposal chute, dropped in, and further handling was done only by maintenance workers. “I [Marisa] am the one who carries the garbage from the kitchen to the chute” (X20nyc98). “We throw out the trash through the garbage shout [sic]” (T4nyc30). Such simplicity was not the norm for most *HMP* respondent households. Whether they were located in urban, suburban, or rural neighborhoods, disposal of garbage was mostly a two-part process.

Health and/or physical capability was mentioned by some respondents as a limiting factor in who could or could not handle garbage duty, but, most often, it seemed to be a

temporary inhibition. “Someone else had to take over the responsibility...one or two times on a couple of occasions when I had eye surgery and knee surgery. After the surgery, things went back to how they were before” (S3). “When Dennis had his heart attack, for a time I [Vivian] carried the garbage out, but then he returned” (G22). “When Matt was in the hospital for surgery, Ann took over his garbage responsibility until he got better” (M18). “Maybe once or twice when Dan was hurt or sick, Donna would do it. Otherwise, he’d maybe ask Diane or Dusty” (X3). “Sue [the daughter] helped a lot with garbage due to Sunny’s health problems” (M17nyc55).

“From father, to oldest daughter, to son, when each child became old enough” (G10)

Changes in responsibility for dealing with their household’s garbage were mentioned by many respondents. This chore, perhaps more than any of the others considered in this inquiry, was passed between a variety of household members, especially as younger ones became big enough to help, and then again as young adults left for college or to live on their own. “The kids are starting to do the garbage more often” (O5). “Josh has begun to help out more... He grew up, so he began taking out the trash, too” (T12). “When they grew older, the kids took a more active role in the daily garbage routine” (O5). “Well, when my son was here, he used to do it” (Z6). “It has changed being that I am in school, now my mother or Linc takes out the garbage” (X20nyc98). “When Lon started his freshman year in college, Larisa [the older sister] did it more” (N19nyc73). “The responsibility has changed throughout the years, because, before, the chore of taking out the garbage was divided amongst more people. Now, it’s only Estella and I...and Estella is hardly home, so it’s basically me” (H4nyc85).

In some instances, problems in a relationship caused a change: “Shane does it more often. This happened through anger and discussion about our division of labor, especially after we broke up and got back together” (Y4). “My husband used to take care of it before we separated” (Z11).

Sometimes a move necessitated change in a household’s garbage routine, particularly when shifting from an urban to a suburban neighborhood. “We moved from Queens [in New York City] to Nassau County [suburban Long Island]. The style of living changed, so the

responsibility changed with it” (M17). “Greg does the garbage more. There are more animals in the back out here than where we used to live. It changed when we moved” (N7).

“When he forgets to put the garbage out on garbage day, she yells” (G13)

At times, conflict erupted around issues of garbage duty. “If the garbage is not removed, Chloe asks the first person available and a disagreement ensues on who’s responsible” (G10). “Sometimes Ben will miss garbage day, and it will pile on the side yard, and Monica will yell” (G13). “I feel that the man of the house should take it out sometimes, and not just me. But I have always had the responsibility of taking the garbage to the street” (X20nyc98). “Ivie feels whoever gets home first on garbage night should take it out. She feels it’s something we should all help out with, including the children when they’re home” (K3nyc68). “Leon knows that he has to do the garbage, and so, almost always, he does. When he doesn’t, there is a disagreement” (T3nyc29). “My mother wants it done when she wants it done. Nate [the son] prefers to do his chores when he’s ready to do them” (J9nyc82).

When help with garbage chores was wanted, but not forthcoming, then disagreements tended to ensue. “Sometimes Judy wants others to help take out the garbage, but they never want to” (K10). “Lora accepts the responsibility for handling garbage. However, she wishes she could have help from others sometimes” (H5). “Liam has given up trying to get anyone else to do it” (S3). “Sometimes Charles expects the kids to take out the garbage. There’s only small disagreement” (R5).

“Why argue? Robert does it so well” (J12nyc83)

Some households reported that there was no conflict about the responsibility for garbage. For some, this calm stemmed from the existence of an accepted arrangement for carrying out the chore. “Garbage is Mike’s job to do around the house, and he’s fine with it, and so is everyone else” (M10). “James knows it has to be done” (M16). “Garbage is not a source of disagreement because everyone has an understanding of what needs to be done, and they don’t ask questions” (V4). “It seems natural and to make the most sense” (Z11). “I don’t know why it isn’t a problem. I guess we just assume our share. We help each other” (K9nyc77). “Jacob doesn’t mind doing the garbage, and he remembers best. So, it’s not

much of a hassle” (T12). “It’s not a source of disagreement because everyone works together to keep the house clean, and garbage is just one of the responsibilities” (X20nyc98).

For others, the idea of disagreeing about garbage seemed silly. “Why would she complain about me taking out the garbage?” (S5). “It’s an unwritten rule. There’s not much disagreement about any household chores” (O4). Garbage itself was said to be an unimportant subject, not worth fighting about. “We don’t argue about petty things” (U7). “There’s no reason to disagree about garbage” (V3nyc22). “It just happened that way. No one knows why it’s not an issue, except that maybe because we don’t consider garbage that important” (P3).

Yet others said that trash disposal was the “easy” part of food chores, which should limit conflict. “Taking out the garbage is the least we can do, seeing as how my mother does practically everything else” (J11). “It’s minor, compared to all she does in the household” (G16nj5). “Because I cook, it’s the least he could do” (H6).

RECYCLING

Unlike other food-related chores, recycling is a relatively new, postmodern addition to household routines. Recycling itself is not new. In previous decades, when various materials such as metal or paper were in short supply, particularly during wartime, portions of a household’s waste were set aside for municipal collection and reuse. More recently, however, recycling has become an aspect of environmental stewardship rather than a military or economic necessity, and it is viewed as a permanent addition to household responsibilities, rather than a temporary expedient. The upswing in consciousness and concern about environmental issues, especially the vast proliferation of waste materials and increasingly limited supplies of raw materials, has diverted some plastics, metals, and paper out of a household’s disposable garbage into a distinct category of recyclables, much of which formerly contained or was used with food. This division of the waste stream has resulted in the establishment of recycling as another food-related chore and the necessity to allocate responsibility for it within each household.

In some HMP households, dealing with recyclables was folded into garbage duty. In others, it was viewed as an entirely different task. Although some municipalities mandate that households must separate recyclable items and make them available on specific days for

collection, other localities do not regulate this matter. The data gathered here show that recycling practices also vary quite widely by households and even by individuals within a household. Some households recycled conscientiously, others did so as it was convenient, and a notable proportion did nothing. In a few households, all members felt responsible for recycling activities, but it was a much more common finding that one person was committed to recycling as a cause and carried out all recycling activities, while the other household members ignored the whole process. From respondents' remarks, it was apparent that the most potent motive to sustain recycling as a habitual practice was when an individual "cared" about recycling as a personally enacted social responsibility rather than through conformity to a norm or regulation. The lack of caring (and, thus, the lack of action) was similarly seen as an individual choice rather than as non-conformity or a minor legal infraction.

Recycling was the only chore considered in *The Household Meals Project* that showed such a propensity for individual preference in its enactment. While individual choice—whether preference or distaste—was important in determining who habitually did other food-related chores, it proved to be the crucial factor, overshadowing all others, in how or if recycling was done and by whom.

As detailed in Chapter Three, the quantitative analysis showed that almost three-fourths of female PHs and two-thirds of male PHs in all respondent households bore some responsibility for recycling. While some respondents' remarks lumped recycling together with garbage as a chore-set, the data clearly showed that, overall, more women were involved in this activity than men, which was opposite to the configuration for garbage. The subset of dual-gender households displayed an even stronger correlation between gender and recycling: among these households, women's participation in recycling went up, while men's participation dropped. Thus, it can be seen that garbage (traditionally identified as a man's chore) and recycling (more often done by women) tend to be viewed as different sorts of tasks, despite their categorical similarity as mechanisms for waste disposal.

Among households where the female PH held responsibility for recycling, many indicated that this chore was viewed as an offshoot of food handling. "Mother was the person who handles all food preparation. She would put them to recycling when empty" (G10). "Recycling is part of household work, and thus it is Ivie's responsibility" (K3nyc68). "Hallie usually cooks and usually recycles, as such" (M7nyc55). "Mina does the recycling

because she cooks. She always does it” (H6). A few included recycling as part of a larger family-role: “It’s part of being a stay-at-home mom” (G16nj5).

“No one else recycles. They just throw it in the regular garbage” (T12)

Several female PHs said they were the only ones in their households who recycled. “I am the one most responsible for collecting recyclables. It was decided by my preference, otherwise no one in the home would recycle” (X20nyc98). “Chloe is the sole person responsible for recycling” (G10). “Allison always does it. She likes doing the recycling” (J12nyc83). “Karen always did the recycling. She has no problem doing it” (O6nyc46). “People in this house are responsible for their own garbage—which means I take care of recycling for everybody” (V11). “It just happened that I do it. Jim doesn’t recycle” (H6). “Carlo throws everything away. Sophia is more environmentally conscious” (C4).

“No one else cares...” (G10)

As mentioned, respondents’ remarks revealed that caring—an emotional and/or political commitment to environmental issues—was frequently a crucial factor in who held responsibility for recycling, whether female or male. Most often, it was only one person in the household. “I’m the only one who does it. Nobody else cares” (L3). “Chloe is the only one who cares about recycling” (G10). “Maura has always felt more strongly about this topic than Clive, and thus is in charge” (F7). “It’s an activity that meshes with the environment issues that my wife believes in” (G8). “Clyde thinks it’s important, so he does it. Everyone else refuses” (S4nyc32). “Jake takes care of it because he cares so much and so strongly” (D6).

When men recycle

In some instances, particularly when male PHs held primary responsibility for recycling, the waste-disposal aspect of this activity was highlighted, and recycling and garbage were seen as similar tasks. This point of view was often accompanied by the now-familiar expression of underlying expectation and assumption (“It just happened that way”): “It happened that way because anything to do with garbage, including recycling, was the

husband's duty" (M17). "It just happened that way. As the man of the house, Julio does garbage and recycling" (G4nyc93).

Tradition and long-time practice were cited by others: "It just happened that way. My father had always done this for years, and that's the way it was" (V12nyc25). "Vinnie recycles items always. He's always done it, as far as I can remember" (U5). "Alex always recycled" (M17). "It is always Dan who collects and actually recycles" (X3). "It was always mainly Uri's responsibility" (Z4nyc2).

For a few (both men and women), having had recycling duties when they were young seemed to extend the activity into adulthood: "Mike did it from young and continued into adulthood with his own family" (M10). "My mom always just did the recycling because her father used to make her do it as a child, so she just stuck with it" (T12).

Kids recycle

Respondents' remarks confirmed the implication from the quantitative data that younger members of *HMP* households were actively involved in recycling and held a fair amount of responsibility for this chore. Some cited what they had learned in school as an impetus toward recycling: "The older kids are also...doing this chore due to learning about recycling from school. They felt that they needed to make the environment better in some way" (O5). "Charles, Jr., has taken on more responsibility for recycling as he has become more aware of his environmental responsibility" (R5). "If I see the plastic for the six-packs, I will cut them so the birds and fishes don't die" (L3). "Crissie [the daughter] makes sure we do it. She set up three things: garbage, recycles—with deposit and without" (Y3).

At times, the younger members' commitment to recycling caused conflict with others in their families: "Recycling has been a source of disagreement because my mother feels that you should throw everything in the garbage, and I'm the only one concerned about recycling. No one else cares to recycle except me" (X20nyc98). "The girls get annoyed if others throw recyclables in regular trash" (F10).

"We all help out" (J11)

Some households reported that recycling was a shared activity. "Everyone recycles on a needed basis. We keep the bin on the porch, and when something needs to be recycled

everyone just puts it in the bin on their own” (V4). “We’re equally responsible” (U7). “It’s a shared responsibility” (J11). “We all do our part” (G18). “Everyone in the household participates, all four individuals” (V11). “We have a can for plastics/glass and paper goods. It’s up to every person who uses a recyclable item to make sure that it goes in” (G22). “Everyone has to make sure that they don’t throw out anything recyclable” (X3). “We all put them in a certain cupboard when done with it, and Molly gets them together and takes them to the recycling place” (X4). “Tara collects the stuff, and Bob takes it out” (R13nyc44). “Alex made sure to teach the children where to throw out the plastic and recyclable items so it would be easier for him” (M17).

One respondent made it clear that all household members cared about recycling: “We, as a family, believe very strongly in recycling. We believe it to be important and that it ultimately helps our economy” (V4).

As with other food-related chores, some households had discussed how the responsibility for recycling should be divided. “When recycling first started, we decided as a family that we would recycle. And all members of the household agreed to put the items in the proper receptacles” (G22). “A mutual consensus was reached that it would be easier to sort out containers right after they emptied out. That’s why the household has one garbage can for regular garbage, and bottles as well as cans get put into a separate bag right away” (A3nyc62). “We all discussed the importance of recycling” (G18).

In other households, recycling was assigned or adopted by default: “Basically because Larry works so much, it just seems to be Molly’s responsibility” (X4). “Your mother is the primary chores person. She doesn’t mind doing the recycling herself, so it seems” (H12nyc91). “Lora has many household responsibilities, and this is just one of them” (H5).

A few respondents said that their households recycled in order to comply with local regulations. “Well, the law says that we have to recycle. We try to obey the law in every way, so, we recycle. Amy and Blake [the primary householders] started recycling when it became a law on Long Island” (V11). “If the recyclables are screwed up, there is a fine to pay” (T11). “Collecting recyclables was not even a concern until we moved to Queens and got fined the first week for not recycling” (A4nyc63). “It’s the law. Recycling was a pressing issue, a mandatory chore” (M9nyc57). These points of view were surprisingly

scarce, indicating that awareness of a legal mandate might be low, the consequences of disobedience were fairly minor, and enforcement probably was relatively rare.

The likelihood of a lack of awareness of recycling regulations or possibly minimal consequences of disregarding them were bolstered by statements from households that did not recycle at all. “Unfortunately, we don’t recycle in our house” (Q3). “It’s not a responsibility to our family” (V12nyc25). “Nobody recycles” (P3). “We’ve never been active recyclers, although I want to get started, but I always forget” (Y4). “We don’t recycle. The town has a garbage dump and recycling site” (N5).

Changes in recycling

Changes in a number of households’ recycling habits were reported. Some respondents spoke of how a recycling routine was started, due to a change in location or greater awareness of environmental issues. “We never really recycled until the new house. It’s in a nicer neighborhood, so we actually recycle now” (J3nyc79). “Charles, Jr., has taken on more responsibility as he has become more aware of his environmental responsibility” (R5). Others said that their households used to recycle but had stopped, largely due to changes in relationships and household composition. “Judy’s husband used to be in charge of recycling, but he’s not there [after their divorce], so it doesn’t get done. No one does it now” (K10). “Sometimes we don’t collect recyclables. The cause was a change in policy of what to throw in the garbage and what not to throw in the garbage. It changed when I started college. I’m the only one concerned about recycling” (X20nyc98).

Conflict

As might be expected when some household members have strong feelings about an issue, while others do not, there was evidence of conflict about recycling, both when it was not done, and when it was done incorrectly. “Everybody has to do it or the wife gets mad” (M17). “Sometimes when Nate doesn’t do this chore in a timely fashion, my mother gets upset and does everything herself” (J9). “Yes, there’s conflict, because everyone should recycle, not just one person” (L3). “It’s a source of disagreement in that no one else cares to recycle except me” (X20nyc98). “Molly does it, and if she complains about it, she still does it anyway” (X4). “Hana wants Min Ho to do some chores, like recycling, but he does not do

it” (A7nyc64). “Sometimes some recycling items are not correctly placed, and this can lead to conflict” (G4nyc93). “The girls get annoyed if others throw recyclables in regular trash” (F10).

“It happens to work out” (M7nyc55)

In some instances, respondents reported a particular lack of conflict about recycling, either because the person who had primary responsibility for this chore felt good about it, or because—like garbage—recycling was considered to be a minor matter, not worth fighting about. Maura: “Clive is comfortable with the responsibility.” Clive: “I like trash day” (F7). “Robert likes doing the recycling” (J12nyc83). “Rosa likes doing it” (S10nyc34). “Mike accepts this as his housework, and so does everybody else. As long as it’s done, there are no problems” (M10). Others mentioned other factors that kept recycling free of conflict in their households: “The law keeps this from being a source of disagreement. Everyone understands that the government expects us to recycle” (V4). “Whenever Joan does the recycling, she remembers her father telling her to do it, and she remembers her childhood” (T12).

Quite a number of respondents offered the opinion that recycling was too trivial to fight about. “It’s not that big of a deal” (H1nyc92). “Dealing with recyclables is not as much of a problem as dealing with garbage. It’s only collected once a week, and it doesn’t smell if it piles up” (K3nyc68). “We just put things to the side and recycle them” (Z6). “We take care of our garbage [referring to recycling, in particular]. It’s what you do!” (V11). “It’s pointless arguing about these things” (S3). “Making a disagreement over something little makes no sense” (T11). “My family doesn’t argue about collecting cans” (V12nyc25). “Never considered it a problem” (X17).

Deposit returns

As mentioned in Chapter Three, over much of the geographic area in which the majority of *HMP* respondents lived, a few-cents deposit was collected by merchants on each container of soft drink or beer that was sold. Consumers were able to return the empty bottles and cans to reclaim their deposit money, and the containers were sent off for reuse. Despite the financial incentive in this institutionalized mechanism for recycling, the majority

of *HMP* households reported that they did not return bottles or cans to stores but, instead, disposed of them in other ways.

“If any of us care enough to return bottles and cans, we will” (N5)

Among the 40% of *HMP* households that did return deposit-containers, this chore was often carried out by the family’s primary food shopper, most of whom were women. Convenience was frequently cited as the determining factor: “Sophia does the shopping, so she’s already there. She takes the bottles back while she’s there” (C4). “Everyone decided it was logical that Gita shops, so she should bring them with her before she goes shopping” (F9). “Helen takes the bottles and cans to the supermarket for redemption. She does it during the week when no one else is around” (X17). Environmental concern was sometimes combined with convenience: “Chloe’s the one who does the shopping and the only one who cares about recycling. She just fell into that position” (G10). “Hyunmi is the only one that does returns because she is the one who goes to the supermarket. She felt that she can do a little bit to save the environment. Plus, she had more time to do it” (O5). “Harita never questions why, she just does it, because she knows everyone else will just throw them out” (G11).

Convenience was also said to be a major factor when male PHs handled bottle returns: “Stan takes them back. He does all the shopping” (F6). “Alex has the most free time...and is available to do the recycling. And his wife told him to do so” (M17). “Joss does all the food shopping, so he takes the bottles back” (O9).

Personal satisfaction was cited several times: “It’s Dan’s hobby” (X3). “It’s enjoyable for Jacob to [take back returns] because it’s something that’s only done after special occasions or holidays. He decided...after special occasions there were too many bottles to store at the house, so they had to be cashed in” (T12). “It wasn’t assigned, it’s more of a personal preference for Damon” (V4). Money was also said to be a motive: “Dan decided that it was a way to make a few extra cents” (X3). “Blake enjoys getting the money and accumulates the most cans, so he is the most prone to taking them for a refund” (V11).

Commitment to environmentalism was mentioned only once in connection with male responsibility for this task: “Liam became responsible for returns. He’s the only one that

believes in recycling aluminum and plastic—the only one committed to the cause and handling messy bottles and cans, so he does it” (S3).

Younger household members also participated in deposit-container returns, sometimes keeping the deposit money for their efforts. “We do not recycle much, but Len will collect bottles to bring to the store, and then he gets the money” (J10). “The children take them back, two to three times a month” (U4nyc26). “Larisa, the older sister, deposits the bottles” (N19nyc73).

Some respondents mentioned doing bottle returns when the person with primary responsibility was ill: “During Dennis’s heart attack, I did take the cans back” (G22). “If Matt was sick, the other would take over” (M18). “Sometimes Gita would go alone, but after her encounter with breast cancer, she has needed help” (F9).

The money received from returned deposits was often mentioned as a factor, with a variety of aspects. For some, it was desired: “We need that deposit money” (M13). “Blake enjoys getting the money, so he is most prone to taking them in for a refund” (V11). “Dennis is the only one that wants to take the cans back. Because nobody else cares about the money coming back from the cans” (G22). “We get a ‘mini-speech’ if we throw out a recyclable, ‘That’s five cents!’” (X3) Others said the money was not a concern: “We don’t need the money from returns” (M9nyc57). “We don’t take them back because we don’t need to” (G19). “We decided long ago that it was just about not throwing them around and making a mess, rather than good for the environment. We don’t want the nickels, we just want them to leave us alone” (N5).

Some gave their household’s returnable bottles and cans away as an act of charity: “We tend to just give the bottles to the homeless men who pick it up. They don’t mind taking it to the store, I guess, because it is a source of money for them” (H12nyc91). “John leaves the cans out in the streets so someone else can deposit them. They do not go to waste” (J4nyc80). “There’s a cat lady who needs the money, so we give them to her” (M9nyc57).

“It never happens...” (Y18nyc11)

Fifty-four percent of *HMP* households did not return refundable bottles and cans. “No one thinks about doing this” (H11nyc90). “We don’t feel like it” (S10nyc34). “It’s time consuming, and we purchase very few deposit bottles” (F10). “There aren’t many”

(J12nyc83). “Neither me nor my father have ever even considered getting deposit refunds” (Y18nyc11).

Several reasons were given for this stance. To some, the effort required was disproportionate to the monetary return: “I take a lot of time to wash them and bring them to the store and only get back one dollar for something that really is insignificant” (G9). “It’s a waste of time” (H6). “It’s a small refund but requires work that no one wants to do” (T3nyc29). “It never happens. It’s more convenient not to, and the plastic bottles and cans are recycled” (Y18nyc11). Lack of time was also cited: “Returning all those things would take too much time” (E4ga1). “No one has any time. I would do it if I had time” (L3). “No time to do it, and they’re so lazy. They don’t even think about it” (R13nyc34). “No time” (M14). One person said the public nature of the task was a problem: “My parents never took back refundables because they said it’s embarrassing” (V12nyc25).

When change was mentioned by respondents in connection with deposit returns, the shift was always a negative one in which the task had been eliminated, mostly in order to save time. “The family completely terminated taking out deposit bottles and cans due to longer working hours” (A3nyc62). “A long time ago in the past, we used to return bottles but don’t anymore” (K3nyc68). “We haven’t done it in years” (R5). “When we lived in the city, we sometimes took them to get money back. But we recycle them now” (T11). “No one does returns anymore, due to the divorce and no time to do it” (K10). “At the time we used to return bottles, Ivie was a homemaker, and this was part of her job. Now, there isn’t any question or discussion about it” (K3nyc68).

IDENTITY

A subject that was explored in the *HMP* questions was how identity—both for individuals and the household as a group—was implicated in how food chores are divided and carried out. Respondents’ remarks were not quantifiable in the same way that responses to other topics were, to show a spectrum of involvement or non-involvement, but they did provide insight into how people felt about the procedures and necessities of these tasks, and how much personal investment was inherent in them. This approach to the issue of identity is not the same as that usually taken to the intersection of food and identity, although it certainly is allied. Rather than involving details of consumption, abstinence, or particular

foods, the ideas here center on feelings of ownership of various activities, or lack thereof; on what spurs individuals toward or away from responsibility; how their work fits into the overall activities of their households; and under what circumstances these actions might deviate from everyday norms. Also considered was the presence of food as a factor in the household's identity as a group or in maintaining individual identity within the family. It was notable that women tended to be more understanding of and responsive to questions of identity than men, who frequently opined that identity and food activities had no relationship in their lives.

The image of health

As detailed in the data about cooking and food production, health was a major concern for those who held significant responsibility for their households' meals. This meant a concern with what foods everyone ate and how the dishes were prepared, as well as a belief that healthy eating reflected a mindfully healthful self and presented that image to others. Health, in these respondents' understanding, was not merely a state of one's physical body, but it also incorporated one's mind and public persona. "Those who think food should be eaten to improve their health eat healthy food and identify themselves as healthy individuals" (H12nyc91). "Foods tell a lot about a person. By eating healthy, it shows that Lydia takes good care of herself" (K11). "The way a person eats reflects the way he or she looks, according to my parents" (V12nyc25). "I think a healthy lifestyle is important" (U5). "Allison feels it is important to eat healthy and hopes that that will be carried on by her family. Good health is the most precious gift in life" (J12nyc83).

"I am a cook..." (Z6)

Cooking as an activity was often said, particularly by women, to be an important aspect of their personal identity. "Cooking is important to me because of my diet, and I just enjoy it. I was a cook—well, I am a cook—and I just love it" (Z6). "I express myself through cooking. It makes me feel good because it's something that I'm good at" (H14nj4). "Lila likes to reflect her talents and show her enjoyment to prepare food" (M11nyc58). "It's an important factor to my mother. She loves to cook. She prepares meals seven days a

week” (X20nyc98). “My macaroni and cheese is my signature, and I get requests for it, and people expect to see it at Thanksgiving. At barbecues, my ribs are expected” (K9nyc77).

Sometimes, cooking was seen by respondents as a key contribution to the household and its identity as a group: “Cooking is a major thing I contribute to this family” (K8wa1). “Preparing food for people I care about conveys a sense of pride” (L3). “It’s not important for me as an individual, but for the family because it’s a group thing” (N7). “It brings us together. It gets us talking, ...and it reminds us we’re a family” (M3). “The food they eat when Sunny prepares the meal shows she has time to cook and put just a little more effort into a meal... She works long hours just to provide everything for her family” (M17).

Family food

Sharing meals was cited as a factor in group cohesion, within a household, an extended family, or a neighborhood: “When we eat together at the dinner table, I feel the family interconnectedness, the family bonding together as a unit” (J4nyc80). “Food is the best way to bring this family together, and everyone is happy” (H9nyc88). “Food is...essential in how the family relates with each other, and how much time they spend together” (M17). “When we all eat together, it gives us a chance to get together and talk to each other” (S4nyc32). “Eating together is an important way in which we spend time together as a family, despite our busy lives. So the food gives us identity as a family” (T3nyc29). “Food may be an important factor in relation to family identity in the sense of getting to know more about each other” (V4). “It’s tradition that we serve and eat white rice each and every day. This is the same for most Chinese families within the area” (J4nyc80). “At dinnertime, everyone gets together. This is part of the parents’ decision that everyone should eat at the same time, since it is based on their cultural traditions. It is part of their family time together. They’re very orthodox about it” (O5). “It’s important to understand the kin network surrounding this household. Our neighbors are our relatives. So, weekend dinners (every weekend) are a tradition. Big, elaborate dinners are important to the parents, and the children come and go as they please” (H5).

“It shows our culture and differentiates us from many households around us” (J8)

For others, the sharing of specific foods cemented a cultural identity, affirmed a sense of belonging and, at the same time, distinguished their household from others: “Cooking traditional Dominican Hispanic food brings out their identity as a group and their family upbringing” (M7nyc55). “[About] the traditional, cultural foods that we do once in a while, one of the most important tasks is that the family gets together to prepare that food. Like the empañadas—it’s not done by one person alone, it’s done by a group. It’s shared as a family group, and then we eat it” (D7nyc70). “Rice and beans (in bean sauce), which is called saucepoix [is important], because it is eaten every Sunday, keeping our Haitian tradition” (M7nyc55). “The food brings them closer to the culture as a group identity. It’s important” (H10nyc89). “If you don’t eat the food from your culture, then it seems weird” (R3nyc35). “Macaroni is important for all of us, because it’s like a family tradition” (X4). “The food that I cook is culture-related. The foods that I know how to cook define my identity” (R3nyc44). “Food is an important factor in our personal identity because the food we eat in the household reflects our culture and religion” (J4nyc80). “For everyone in the house, a big part of our identity is our culture. And so much of Hispanic culture is centered on food” (M10). “The dishes we eat usually describe us in terms of cultural identity. We’re Bangladeshi, so we eat the usual Indian and Bangladeshi foods like rice, all sorts of curry, kebabs, fish fry, all sorts of sweets and desserts” (T4nyc30). “There are certain recipes that have been in my family for a long time. These foods are important to the three of us. Some of these foods are pot roast, meatballs, and baked ziti” (K5nyc75). “There are personal favorite dishes of members of the household, and they are generally cultural dishes. It is important to still eat food you normally would not in the U.S.” (D7nyc70). “For Punjabis, food is a main part of life. Especially foods such as chicken tikka, kebobs, nan, and many more. Punjabis love to eat and love to feed or have dinner parties with others, such as relatives and friends” (O5). “We were born and raised eating this food. Since it is cultural, it brings us closer to our culture” (O6nyc46). “We have all eaten Haitian food our whole lives, and to not eat it would be losing a part of ourselves” (P3). “The food we eat is very cultural. “Our nationality is Nigerian, and we eat mainly Nigerian food. Eating rice and stew, eggplant with green plantains, and gari (cassava) with West African soup helps us identify with being Nigerian” (K3nyc68).

Some saw the food from their households as a significant part of the collective, or family, identity that was presented to the rest of the world: “We all take pride in what we cook and how people enjoy our cooking” (N7). “Our family is one that eats a lot, and we as a household, are identified [by this] at gatherings” (K6nyc76). “From the way that other people understand us, they know that Joy has a big association with food, and that’s certainly a big characteristic of our family” (O2).

*“Karen cooks cultural food as an attempt to bring us closer to our culture”
(O6nyc46)*

Particular foods and cooking techniques were sometimes identified as ways in which cultural or ethnic identity was passed along from generation to generation. “The ethnic foods are important cultural reasons to pass down recipes” (J6). “My father believes the food that we eat expresses our heritage and how we grew up” (T11). “The diet of the parents affects their children when they’re all grown up” (H12nyc91). “I think the dishes we eat every night for dinner describe us in terms of cultural identity” (T4nyc30). “We tend to lean toward Italian cooking. It’s because of how we were raised” (T12). “Irish stew—my mom used to make it, and I like to make it for my family. It’s sort of tradition” (G18). “Generally, British meals reinforce our British heritage and provide a tie to the United Kingdom” (F7). “Plantains, rice and beans, because this is part of the culture. It keeps the family more in tune with the traditions and culture” (H10nyc89).

“It’s not American food, it’s Latin food that keeps a part of my country with us” (W4)

The association of food with upbringing was mentioned most often as an important factor by respondents who were immigrants, for whom specific foods acted as a palpable connection with their earlier lives and environments and an affirmation of their personal and cultural identities. “The parents came from a different country and are likely to cook their cultural food meals. In a way, it is a personal identity of where they came from” (O5). “Everything we eat reveals our culture and our ties to our native country” (J8). “Since both Uri and Tanya come from the same country, they are both familiar to certain foods that became a tradition in this household. Their importance lies in the tradition of their families” (Z4nyc2). “I like to eat anything that reminds me of home” (W4). “I am part of a Polish-

American household which is strongly represented and characterized by the foods and meals consumed... We are used to having Polish dishes, prepared with specific ingredients” (Y18nyc11). “Sarah has a strong personal preference for cultural foods such as oxtail, curry goat, and pig stew... It is important to still eat food you normally would not in the U.S.” (D7nyc70). “Rice, because we are from China. Although we are in America, I would like to stick to at least some customs and traditions from my background” (A8nyc65). “As a Russian family, we have Russian food. Russian food for a Russian family” (Q4nyc45).

“All food makes everyone in this household happy, especially Hispanic food”
(S10nyc34)

In many *HMP* households, ethnic or heritage food was often said to be satisfying in a gustatory double-play: not only was the food savored, but it also resonated with a reassurance of identity and belonging. “Any Jamaican dish makes us happy because they taste good, and we’re identifying with our culture” (T11). “For the children, if they haven’t eaten a certain Korean dish in a long time, they get happy when Sunny cooks a delicious meal because their cravings are satisfied” (M17). “Everyone loves it when I make salt fish, green banana, plantain, and fried dumplings. That makes them happy, because that’s everyone’s favorite” (R3nyc35). “Ethnic foods that usually take long to cook get made only in the holidays... They make you happy because the food tastes and smells good, and it’s only eaten once a year” (M10). “The people in this household were raised on Filipino food. They’ve been eating it their entire lives, and if it disappeared one day, their meals wouldn’t be the same to them” (G3). “When foods we don’t eat as often are prepared, family members appreciate the variety. This could be certain Nigerian dishes like yam porridge and peeper soup” (K3nyc68). “Borscht, chicken, and blintzes all trigger happy memories that Tanya and Uri had in Russia” (Z4nyc2).

Some respondents from immigrant households noted that younger members, who had been born or educated in the U.S., identified with American foods, while the older members retained an affinity for foods from the old country. This was, in physical form, an effect of assimilation into the new cultural environment. “For myself, my husband and older daughter, West Indian dishes such as stew chicken and rice and peas may serve as an indicator of our cultural background. While for my younger daughter and granddaughter,

certain American dishes will serve as an indicator of their background” (G5). “My grandma loves pasta, which isn’t surprising, since she was born and raised in Italy, so pasta for her is part of her heritage. Since she cooks pasta often for my family we have also learned to love it, but I don’t consider it part of our heritage, as I do for my grandma” (X3).

“Lori tries to make ethnically specific stuff in the holiday meals” (N5)

On holidays and weekends, especially, heritage and identity-evoking food were prepared, and they helped to sustain a sense of tradition, continuity, and contentment. “Certain food is eaten on holidays and special occasions because of our Italian background. Examples are fish on Christmas Eve, pasta on Sundays, and pork on Easter” (T12). “For special occasions, I like to make dishes such as biryani and korma, sweet rice pudding and other sweets for desserts, and all kinds of appetizers such as samosas, pakoras, and kebabs. It takes a longer time to cook, like almost five to six hours, but the foods are enjoyed by all” (T4nyc30). “Rice and beans every Sunday. We keep some Haitian traditions” (M8nyc56). “Korean food is very important to the identity of the family. On certain holidays, the family will eat a certain dish as tradition” (M17). “Ethnic foods that usually take long to cook get made only in the holidays. Like roast beef, macaroni and cheese from scratch, and lechon (roast pig). They make you happy because the food tastes and smells good, and it’s only eaten once a year. Especially, special desserts, like flan” (M10). “For all of us, Italian food must be at all holidays. Pasta, sauce, meatballs, cannolis. It’s because of tradition and culture. They’re used for celebration, especially” (X3). “On family events there are always planned dishes. For example, on Christmas, a family member always makes raviolis, and for birthdays in this house family members always get a homemade baked cake. It shows our Italian heritage” (O3). “We tend to eat ethnic at Vinnie’s parents’ house during the holiday seasons, and they’re very Italian” (U5). “Rice with stew is a main Nigerian dish. Certain snacks like meat pies, bean cake, and fried buns are usually made during festive occasions. These foods are important sources of identity for everyone in the household” (K3nyc68). “Arroz con gandules (yellow rice with green pigeon peas), everyone expects it. It’s a cultural holiday food. Pernil (pork shoulder), too. It’s cultural for the holidays” (K9nyc77). “On Thanksgiving, we always have our turkey, with apple and pumpkin pies for dessert” (O3).

“Christmas cookies, everyone devours them. And potato sausage...these are our Christmas traditions” (M5).

“As long as I’m cooking, and the food is there, they’re happy” (T4nyc30)

Repeatedly, respondents emphasized that home cooking, in particular, made them and others in their households happy and conveyed love from the cook to other family members. This concept was presented briefly in the section on cooking and meal preparation, but it was iterated more frequently in respondents’ remarks about personal and/or family identities. “To all of us, food is important because...it’s a form of happiness, something that makes us feel good. Food is the happiness of the soul” (S10nyc34). “Sunny gets happy if her family enjoys the meal” (M17). “The food we eat at home gives you a sense of the love, care, and affection that revolves around the household” (J4nyc80). “Homemade food consumed together brings the atmosphere of a holiday into the house even on a regular weekday” (A3nyc62). “Any of our home-cooked meals increase happiness. People seem more content. There’s a lot of effort put into a home-cooked meal” (G22). “I love my family, and I enjoy cooking for them and knowing they’ve eaten a good meal” (S4nyc32). “A home-cooked meal makes us feel good. A lot of the time what I cook is a request of my sister or father” (K5nyc75). “Traditional, home-prepared meals are best because the quality is better than takeout. It also makes the other people feel loved” (U7). “Home-baked goods increase happiness because of the thought that goes into it” (T12). “Food makes your soul happy” (G18). “Sam has a love affair with food. He loves good food, and he really looks forward to it. There’s always disappointment when food cannot be made” (K9nyc77). “Most families don’t have someone who cooks, so they never have fresh-from-scratch food” (K8wa1). “Sometimes, if my mother is proud of me, she’ll offer to cook whatever I like” (T3nyc29). “If someone accomplishes something, or if it’s a birthday, a favorite dish will be made” (T12). “If someone got a raise, or if a child got a good grade, then Tanya would make that person’s favorite dish, as a reward” (Z4nyc2). “If you do really good in school or get married, then she will cook you your favorite dish” (H13nyc92). “If my husband, son, or daughter does well in school, chores, or job, I will cook a meal that is most appealing for them” (H11nyc90). “When I am really happy, I will reward my family with cooking them

something good” (N5). “If Nate does well in school...my mother will make a special dish for him or his favorite food” (J9nyc82).

Perhaps more rarely than might have been anticipated, a few respondents indicated that they had a negative relationship with food; that, somehow, it had a conflicted impact on their lives. Dieting and consciousness about weight were concerns, as was health: “It’s stressful, because I don’t want to eat too much and get fat” (L3). “It makes us have heart attacks, actually” (U4nyc26).

Individuality and meat

The expression of individuality and personal identity through food was mentioned by some, particularly in regard to eating—or not eating—meat. Interestingly, these remarks focused on both sides of meat consumption: pro, in which meat was a distinctively important food; and con, in which a vegetarian diet was followed. On both sides of the issue, the presence or absence of meat went far beyond the physical and tapped into veins of emotion, gender norms, memory, and spirituality. “For my mother, meat is an important part of her identity. There has to be meat to go with every meal” (X20nyc98). “I think food might only be important for me, but not for my family. I don’t believe my wife went through the same kind of hardships as I did. Now, in every dinner, there should be at least one meat dish. This goes back when I was younger, where we would only have chicken if it was someone’s birthday. The birthday boy/girl would get a thigh” (A8nyc65). “Dusty wants to be buff. He drinks protein powder and shakes, and he eats meat to be a man” (X3).

Vegetarianism had equally strong associations and adherence: “Maybe the fact that Crissie doesn’t eat meat shows how she’s very compassionate and caring” (Y3). “Carl doesn’t believe in killing animals” (M6nyc54). “The ‘vegetarian’ label represents Diane’s concern for animal rights” (X3). “For Cole, being a vegetarian represents his spiritual identity” (P3). “Mom is a vegetarian, so she only eats non-meat and prepares other stuff for the rest” (O4).

To each, his/her own

Preference or avoidance of particular foods, or a predilection for certain cuisines were mentioned by numerous respondents as markers for their individuality and identity within

their households. “We all eat different things and dislike different things. I dislike seafood. My brother won’t eat dairy. My mother dislikes spicy food, and my dad won’t try new things” (J11). “My mom is the vegetable-lover in the family. I love seafood, and my sister loves pasta. Therefore, when we eat at other family members’ houses, we are made fun of, but it’s a family affair” (K6nyc76). “I do have a large capacity for chocolate, and nobody else really does. So, I guess I’m addicted to chocolate. No other strong food identity, just the chocolate” (O2). “People identify most of the vegetables being prepared with Becky, because it’s her preference, and it’s well known” (U4nyc26). “For me, there is some cultural identity with some of the Latin American foods. So, we’ll have rice and beans sometimes for me, and sometimes we’ll have some German food, like pork roast, for Dennis, because it reminds him of his cultural roots” (G22). “My husband enjoys southern food because of his family’s southern cooking. I like certain West Indian foods that remind me of home” (H11nyc90). “My father wants either hot sauce or pepper in all his food because, he says, that’s the Jamaican way” (T11). “I have to have Swedish pancakes. They identify my heritage and are delicious” (M5). “We’re all different. I love spaghetti and any other foods from my heritage. Dean identifies with tuna noodle casserole; no one knows why. And gefilte fish from his heritage. Jun favors rice, seaweed, and Korean food, because he’s Korean. Jason loves rice and all Chinese food, because he’s Chinese” (N5).

“How can I relate to a pork chop? How does that show my identity?” (Tony, L3)

As detailed in the preceding pages, many *HMP* respondents felt that food was somehow involved in or acted as an indicator of their personal and/or family identity. On the other hand, for some respondents—most of them male—questions about the relationship of food and identity were improbable, baffling, or just silly. “I don’t see why food would be linked to identity. Food is a necessity” (Klaus, K4nyc74). “Food has nothing to do with personal identity. Group identity has nothing to do with food” (James, M16). “What we eat isn’t what we are” (Carter, K5nyc75). “If someone were to think of my family, food would definitely not be the first thing to come to their mind” (Mona, M4). “No one in my household thinks that there are any important sources of identity that correlate with food” (Manny, Q3). “It’s just food. I don’t think the food you eat gives you an identity. We all love good food, but it doesn’t give us a personal identity” (Neil, S5). “Eating is a need, but

not a factor in your own identity” (Deirdre, M14). “I guess I don’t know how food plays into an identity” (Rusty, O2). “We are not identified by what we eat. If we were, I’d be a kielbasa” (Art, U4nyc26). “This is a stupid question. Am I supposed to identify with ravioli because I’m Italian?” (Blake, V11).

Some responses that denied a relationship between identity and food were framed from the perspective of a stable sufficiency of food. In these households, an adequate supply of food was assured, and because hunger was not an issue, neither was food seen to be. In itself, this chronic lack of hunger (as well as the lack of chronic hunger) acted as a marker of identity, as all of these respondents gave evidence that they belonged to a food-rich environment. “There are more important things to worry about. We don’t come from a culture where food is a huge part of life” (S3). “Food is just not important” (W5nyc60). “We don’t generally find that food can make us or break us” (V4). “Everyone in the house just eats when they’re hungry. They don’t think the food they eat identifies each one of them” (K10). “Everyone in this household likes to eat, and no one is criticized for eating too much” (U8nyc28). “What’s liked is what’s eaten. It’s just not that important in defining who we are” (T12). “Not relevant to us, because we eat a variety of different foods, not just one particular food or food group” (O9). “Meals have no value. We choose to eat or not to eat” (M6nyc54).

Chapter 5

The Kitchen: The Heart of the Household

Previous chapters examined the nuances of food chores, who does them, and how, among 150 of *The Household Meals Project*'s respondent households, so attention now shifts to where the activity takes place: the kitchen. Kitchens are said to be the “heart of a home.” Much of the work that makes up and sustains daily life goes on in them. A kitchen is the primary gathering spot for household members, and good friends and relatives visit there rather than in the more formal “company” rooms. It is a place of literal and figurative warmth, of emotional and physical connection, and a site of production, reproduction, and consumption activities for both individuals and groups.

BACKGROUND

Despite this central location in daily life, there has been limited research into or documentation of the physical reality of everyday kitchens and exploration of the impact, influence, and implications of this social space. Display images abound; popular remodeling and architectural design books and magazines are filled with photos of glossy, spotless kitchens. But it is almost unheard-of to find lived-in kitchens shown in a public forum—popular or academic—much less a “real-life” refrigerator, pantry, or cupboard open, with contents visible. Given the recent groundswell of interest in daily-life practices by social scientists, this lack of visual data and its analysis is perplexing. In order to truly understand the activities of daily life, it seems necessary to look in detail at the places where they occur, particularly when the location is as specific and ubiquitous as a kitchen. Such a need has been noted: this aspect of my research answers a call by social geographers (Giddens 1985; Soja 1985; Urry 1985) for the empirical examination of “particular times and places” in which the “spatio-temporal structuration of social life (and of the labour process [in this case the domestic labor process]) defines how social actions and relationships are materially constituted, made concrete...” (Soja 1985:98). But the little photo research that has been done on domestic food production focuses on areas other than the social environment of kitchens, particularly in the suburbs (these tend to focus on details of cooking and eating; see Heisley and Levy 1991; Carrington 1999). The present inquiry looks at how kitchens embody Soja’s idea of “spatiality,” or socially produced and influential space as “...an active area where purposeful human agency jostles problematically with tendential social

determinations to shape everyday activity [and] particularize social change” (1985:90). In other words, I look at how kitchens and their storage spaces shape the activities that go on within them and may influence the attitudes and expectations of household members, particularly with regard to equal or unequal performance of domestic food chores and the (re)negotiation of how these responsibilities are allocated between household members.

The data for this investigation are derived from a series of photographs of kitchens and food storage spaces—including refrigerators, freezers, pantries, cupboards, and other spots used for food storage or activities—taken in 113 respondent households. The photographs complement the detailed questionnaires and in-depth interviews that profiled the division of food-related labor and responsibilities in these same households, and they were taken at the same time that the questionnaires or interviews were completed. As specified in Chapter Two, the photographs were an optional part of the study, and not all of the participating households gave permission for their premises to be photographed, although 75% of them did.

The collection of photographs is an exceptionally rich data-source. For this dissertation, the visual data is examined in a way that focuses on the physical configuration and “look” of the kitchens that were photographed. In such an approach, one “reads” the appearance and placement of the room and its contents as texts that are laden with symbolic meanings. Thus seen as a hermeneutic unit, the kitchen is a collection of objects-as-documents that can be decoded for ideas, messages, influences, propaganda, norms, and other influences that are communicated to those who access it. In this, I work from the belief that material culture is a discursive medium: “Every material object is constituted as an object of discourse... So the use and form of material culture can be understood in relation to power and knowledge as can the social practices producing it” (Tilley 1990:333, 338). This objective requires a great deal of digging into the past in order to identify the influences that are inherent in each thing. To accomplish this goal, I conduct “social archaeology” (Tilley 1990) on 20th-century trends in the design, development, and marketing of kitchens and appliances in order to understand what the objects are saying today.

The point here is to concentrate on understanding the kitchen as social space by investigating and interpreting how it shapes and is shaped by the activities that take place within it. This emphasis is the most germane to my research focus: to investigate the

division of responsibility for domestic food chores in dual-headed households and the underlying issues of gender, power, utility, individual responsibility and preference, cultural norms, and relationship or household dynamics. In this regard, the photographs serve to show how the room that often serves as the heart of a home reflects its household's internal configurations of power, status, and gender in a spatial dimension, and how the kitchen itself holds inherent influences—stemming from its design, composition, and the history of its development—that may affect a household's food practices.

In a contemporaneous and congruent social trend that accompanied the architectural codification of household kitchens, domestic food practices were transformed from ordinary knowledge (culturally and intergenerationally transmitted folk knowledge) into “domestic science” (a prescriptive discipline of techniques and practices that is centered on health). Both the symbolic content of kitchens and the professionalization of food chores are key factors in my analysis and interpretation of the stubbornly gendered practices of food-related domestic responsibilities. The current chapter focuses on the historic evolution of the ubiquitously suburbanized American kitchen. Both the trend toward a rational, masculinized setting for food-related “women's work” and the transformation of home cooking into domestic science are explored in Chapter Six.

THE SUBURBAN(IZED) KITCHEN

In the neighborhoods of suburban and urban New York (and the United States, in general), a kitchen with built-in workspace, storage spaces, and electric- or gas-powered appliances is virtually universal—each dwelling contains an independent food-production-and-storage plant. These rooms are markedly uniform in composition and appearance, no matter their size or location. Interestingly, this common social space has remained largely unchanged in layout and configuration since World War II (Plante 1995), when suburban housing was mass-produced and the open-plan kitchen with built-in cabinets, counters, and appliances became an American archetype. There have been some changes during the decades since then—most notably in decorative elements and the advent of a host of small-to-midsize electric appliances—but, overall, the suburban kitchen has stayed constant in its construction and contents since its proliferation in the post-WWII building boom. This aesthetic monopoly has also influenced the modification of urban kitchens—despite

limitations of available space—to achieve the suburban look as much as possible. I find such a long-lasting uniformity to be remarkable, especially considering the wide diffusion of diverse styles and origins in home wares that stems from the growth of U.S. purchasers as the world’s most avid consumers of global goods.

As detailed in Chapters Two and Three, *The Household Meals Project’s* respondents varied considerably by economic and educational status, as well as by racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, none identified themselves as “wealthy” in terms of income, although the range of annual household income stretched from \$11,000 to \$310,000. All said they were middle-class or upper-middle-class, and their kitchens reflected this commonality of class status. During this investigation, I encountered none of the fabulous kitchens seen in voyeuristic design magazines and television shows, which led me to believe that they are a phenomenon of the highest economic brackets and not commonly associated with the middle class, even its upper subset. Likewise, even the poorest households all had kitchens that were similar (with large appliances, counters, and built-in cabinets) to those in more economically comfortable households, which—visually, at least—seemed to put them on a common footing. In sum, I found that these kitchens closely resembled each other and showed little variation in configuration. Whether in a house or an apartment, the physical spaces were strikingly similar (see Figures 1 to 4; additional illustrations are presented in Appendix 3). Almost universally, both large and small, these rooms had an “open plan” (as open as the square footage permitted) and a variety of permanent, built-in features: cooking, storage, and cleaning appliances, hot and cold water taps and a sink, upper and lower wall-mounted cabinets (the latter with drawers), and counter space.



Figure 1: This urban kitchen is in a rented apartment in Brooklyn, NY. Household income was less than \$16,000 a year (A8nyc65).



Figure 2: This kitchen is in an owner-occupied condominium in a suburb of Rochester, NY. Household income was \$50,000 a year (M14).



Figure 3: This kitchen is in a house in suburban Suffolk County, NY. Household income was \$120,000 a year (J6).



Figure 4: Another Suffolk County kitchen with more decoration and “stuff” on the counters than in Figure 1, but it still has the same look and components. Household income was \$165,000 a year (Z9).

This combination of kitchen configuration and contents was a hallmark of the thousands of new houses that were built in American suburbs by the Levitts and other developers in the 1940s and 1950s. The houses touted a central kitchen “...equipped with gleaming, electric, easy-to-use...appliances” (Baxandall and Ewen 2000:136), as well as linoleum floors and built-in kitchen cabinets (ibid:75; Hellman 2004). Although updated through the decades since then, the differences between the kitchen in a Levitt-built housing development and one in 21st-century construction are mostly cosmetic—the ideology and the “look” of the food-preparation and storage areas of a suburban kitchen of 1950 and one built in 2011 are essentially the same. Indeed, in slightly more than half a century, this particular agglomeration of form and function has become so monolithic that a term seems needed that can encompass physical reality, social history, and create a constant inclusion of both suburban and urban locations. I refer to the “suburbanized” kitchen for this purpose. (As mentioned previously, further examples of the suburbanized kitchen in both urban and suburban households may be found in Appendix 3.)

The room and its contents

In recent years, the trend in suburbanized kitchen design, construction, and renovation has incorporated an ever-larger proportion of the overall dwelling to include many social and familial activities. This “sociable kitchen” (Pittel 2003) often adds a lounging area with electronic entertainment equipment, a fireplace, large windows, and other amenities to the traditional area for cooking, storage, and eating; see Figures 5 and 6. (The trend is an amusing irony, given the super-sizing of latter-day McMansions: such multi-faceted use harks back to the multi-purpose functionality of a one-room cabin.)



Figure 5: This is one view from the midpoint of a sociable kitchen... (N6).



Figure 6: ...and this looks in the other direction (N6).

Unlike the “working” part of the kitchen, the extra space in a sociable kitchen is usually furnished with a variety of moveable furniture—like most of the rest of the house—that the residents expect to take with them should they relocate. In contrast, the core food-processing and food storage areas are intended to be permanent installations—part of the house itself. This is a notable difference, as the immovability of kitchen furnishings is a relatively recent phenomenon, and it is a key factor in my argument.

Whether or not all major appliances are considered to be permanent features or moveable possessions depends on the locality. In Texas, for example, a refrigerator is usually taken with one’s furniture, while the stove and dishwasher remain in the house. However, in metropolitan New York and northern Illinois (two areas in which I have lived and moved frequently), a refrigerator usually stays in place for the new tenants (McLeland 2005).

Despite such regional differences, the latter-day kitchen tends to be a fixed environment. Once installed, its appointments are permanent. This is even reflected in the term used for changing a kitchen: the process is called “remodeling,” which implies architectural revision, rather than “redecorating,” which implies a more surface makeover. This idea of kitchen permanence is seconded by the appearance of the appliances, cabinets, and other components. The principal kitchen machines—stoves, refrigerators, and dishwashers—tend to be massive metal boxes with varied controls and amenities (inset water and ice dispensers on refrigerators; griddles and grills on stoves; and multi-button controls for nuances of cleaning functions on dishwashers). While often easy to manipulate and user-friendly to those accustomed to the conventions of electronic devices—once one becomes familiar with the features—they are not owner-friendly. With complex motors and electronic systems, the machines can be difficult for an inexpert owner to maintain in good working order. If—or when—something goes wrong or breaks, a technical specialist is needed to make repairs. In short, these appliances are big, complicated, and beyond general understanding; however, they are also useful and convenient. The other common components of contemporary kitchens tend to be less dominating of the roomscape, but they are even more embedded in it. Sinks, plumbing, countertops, and lower cabinets and drawers are fastened together and onto each other, while upper cabinets are riveted to the internal framework of the house itself.

Variations on a theme

Such permanence was not always a feature of American kitchens, once the heat source for cooking was moved out of a structural component—the fireplace—into a piece of furniture—the stove. Until well into the twentieth century, most fundamental pieces of kitchen equipment had legs and stood independent of the building that contained them.



Figure 7: A pre-World War II kitchen...the only built-in elements are the sink and pull-down ironing board.¹

They were considered to be furnishings: personal possessions of the dwelling's occupants rather than architectural body parts. In 1930, General Electric advertised an electric stove that looks more like a bureau or dressing table to post-millennial eyes (see Figure 10). Around the turn of the 20th century, many kitchen sinks were basins on legs perched underneath a wall-mounted tap or indoor water pump. In the pre-Freon era, iceboxes had legs, and even after home refrigeration was electrified, a motor perched on top of the cooling box or was slung underneath, humming away between the legs. Moveable furniture even provided cabinets and counter space: Hoosier-style cabinets² were standard kitchen furnishings from the 1890s to the 1930s. So how did legs and moveability disappear from kitchens? And, keeping in mind this chapter's central focus on the effect of a household's kitchen on the activities that take place within it, what is implied by the shift to a fixed environment?

¹ Photograph from the Collections of The Henry Ford in Dearborn, MI.

² See *Hoosier Cabinets* (Kennedy 1989) for a complete history of the development and manufacture of these kitchen cabinets.

I would like to extend these questions before approaching an answer to them. An allied and equally important factor in this puzzle is the way that the suburbanized kitchen has become such a dominant part of the homescape that any alternative is difficult to conceive, especially for young people. When I began working with the *HMP* visual data, my undergraduate research assistants noticed that the photographed kitchens were numbingly similar in appearance, but very few could even imagine another practical format. When shown photos of excavated kitchens at Pompeii—a prosperous city in a culture with a sophisticated, diverse culinary tradition, which is known from Apicius, Lucullus, and other literary ancient Roman gastronomes—they could (literally) see other possibilities. The great advantage to the use of Pompeian kitchens as an alternative example was that the city had a high social and technical sophistication, its norms and practices are well-documented, and, yet, it remains preserved in amber, a window on another culture untouched by our contemporary influence. In the private houses that had kitchens, stone and concrete cooking benches held braziers with metal and heat-proof ceramic vessels, and there were no hearths, ovens, or other structural heat sources for cooking that also would have heated the building (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: In the kitchen of an upper-class house in Pompeii, the waist-high counter held braziers and other cooking equipment. The space underneath was used for storage.

Instead, items that needed to be baked or roasted were taken to a nearby bakery, which had a large oven similar to those in wood-fired pizzerias today (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: This Pompeian bakery's oven produced bread and pastries for sale and, for a fee, could be used by local households.

Those conventions minimized excess heat in a torrid climate and were sensible adaptations to environmental conditions. It must be added that these were mostly houses of the wealthy.

The apartments (*insulae*) where the middle and lower classes lived usually had no distinct kitchens at all, but probably had a brazier for heating water or wine and a storage area for bread, olives, oil, and other ready-to-eat items, while already-cooked food for the main meal was bought at the many small shops (*thermopolia* or Roman delicatessens) that dotted every block and was either eaten there or taken away.

The Pompeian kitchens provide a vivid alternative to the present-day suburbanized kitchen. And the existence of a practical variant drives home the impression that the mono-format of our kitchens has achieved national archetypal status. It certainly is found all over the United States, seemingly regardless of variations in social class or climate, as reliance on air conditioning makes the excess heat from indoor stoves and ovens tolerable even in this continent's torrid regions. It appears, therefore, that the suburbanized configuration has itself become hegemonic. But how did this occur, and how is this development tied into the generalized praxis of domestic food chores?

The historic record

I believe all of these questions are intimately connected. Like many social phenomena, the answer is multi-faceted and contains a combination of intertwined political, economic, and cultural influences. In order to understand these various factors, it is necessary to look to the past to see how things, and practices, achieved their current configurations.

In the early decades of the 20th century, first gas and then electric stoves were developed for the home kitchen, as were electric refrigerators. At first, their design echoed earlier appliances—wood- or coal-burning stoves and ice boxes. Legs were important on the former, to keep the firebox off a floor that could ignite from lengthy heating. It was also practical to have legs on an icebox, to enable a bottom-mounted drip pan to catch water from the melting block of ice in the top compartment. As mentioned, sinks and storage cabinets for dishes were additions to the room rather than built into it, and both commonly were mounted on legs. The styling was generally graceful, echoing the curves and proportions of wood furniture, aimed at giving a kitchen a genteel look that was deemed appropriate for its inevitably female occupant(s).

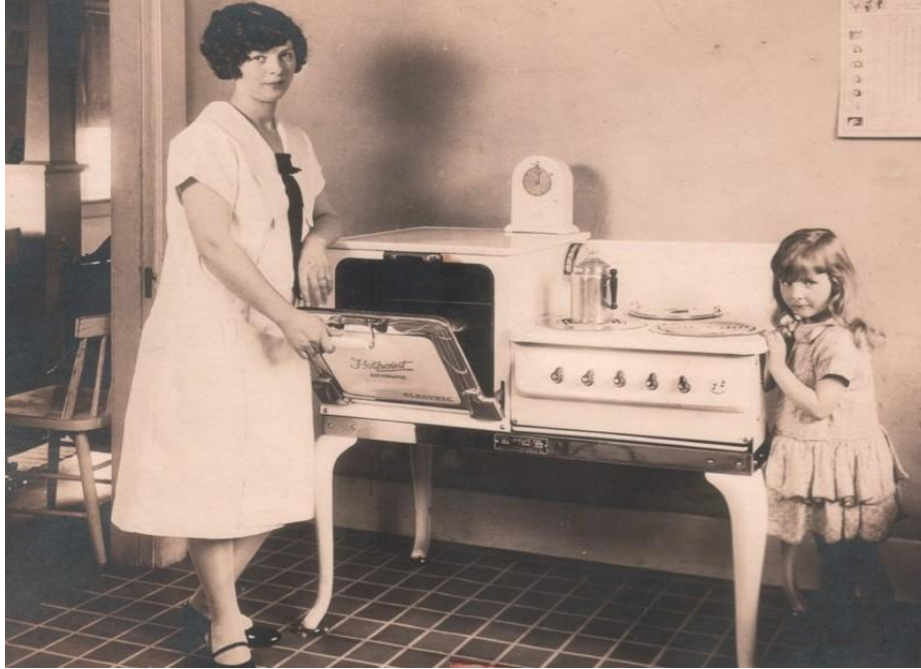


Figure 10: A 1930 Hotpoint electric stove with Queen Anne-style legs.³

As appliances using the alternative fuels of gas and electricity were refined, it became apparent that legs were no longer necessary for fire-prevention reasons, and by 1940 they had largely disappeared. An accompanying development was the household's shift from handling and/or supplying its own solid cooking fuel (coal and wood were the most common, purchased from vendors or chopped by the householders, and sometimes both) to reliance on pipes or wires to convey fuel from a distant commercial source (Bose et al. 1984). This change introduced a third party, utility companies, into the daily food routines—one with a strong profit motive and a mandate from the ideology of technological advance that interpreted its self-interested activities as those done for public benefit. During this developmental time, both power companies and appliance manufacturers—sometimes different divisions of the same organization—engaged in many strategies to familiarize the buying public with their wares and to create a growing demand for them (Field 1990; Rose 1984). One contemporary (and paternalistic) home economist put it, “Manufacturers had to help women transform their work from the ‘hand-craft age’ into the era of the ‘machine operative’” (Lopate 1977:825). They offered free cooking lessons, recipe booklets (Plante 1995:248), and “loaner” appliances so women could become familiar with the new

³ This photograph from Randy Stalding's family-heritage website is used with his permission.

technologies in their own homes, sent “health experts” (mostly women) to inform interested families of the possibilities and benefits of clean, smoke-free cooking (Busch 1983), and ran marketing and advertising campaigns to build and feed into the strong allure of the new and the modern. These activities occurred across the U.S.:

All the new devices and new foodstuffs that were being offered to American households were being manufactured and marketed by large companies which had considerable amounts of capital invested in their production: General Electric, Procter & Gamble, General Foods, Lever Brothers, Frigidaire, Campbell’s, Del Monte, American Can, Atlantic & Pacific Tea—these were all well-established firms by the time the household revolution began, and they were in a position to pay for national advertising campaigns to promote their new products and services (Cowan 1976: 20).

Again, by 1940 (which seems to have been a watershed point in the evolution of the modern kitchen), both gas and electric stoves were well-established as desirable durable goods, electric refrigeration was becoming common, and women had largely been sold on the idea that the best kind of kitchen to have was one with shiny, new appliances and plenty of integrated storage and workspace. So it was almost inevitable that when millions of men went away to war and women were needed to replace them in the workplace to push America’s manufacturing capacity into full-production mode, one of the key persuasions used to lure six to ten million “girls” into jobs (“The Home Front” 2001) was the promise that, if they worked and kept the home fires burning, then after the war they could look forward to new houses with kitchens full of new appliances (Inness 2001) (see Figure 11).

It's a promise!

JIM'S going away tomorrow... and there will be long, lonely days before he comes back.

But that little home sketched there in the sand is a symbol of faith and hope and courage. It's a promise, too. A promise of gloriously happy days to come... when Victory is won.

Victory Homes of tomorrow will make up in part at least for all the sacrifices of today... and that's our promise!

They will have better living built in... electrical living with new comforts, new conveniences, new economies to make every day an adventure in happiness.

Plan for your Victory Home now... the sure way is to buy War Bonds. Every Bond you buy is an investment in your future happiness and security... every dollar you put into Bonds helps bring our boys back sooner—and safer. Buy another Bond today.

The General Electric Consumers Institute at Bridgeport, Conn., is devoted to research on solving home problems such as Nutrition • Food Preparation • Food Preservation • Appliance Care • Appliance Repair • Laundering • Home Heating and Air Conditioning. Helpful booklets are available from your G-E Appliance Dealer, or General Electric, Consumers Institute, Dept. 1-3-3.

APPLIANCE AND MERCHANDISE DEPARTMENT, BRIDGEPORT, CONN.

GENERAL ELECTRIC

Four in an Electric Kettle and the Nine more Toasters, Thermostats, Smokers, and other appliances over C. R. S. The Smoker right above in the "Star of China" over N. R. C. See newspapers for this, others.

Figure 11: This early-1940s ad focuses on what the advertiser (General Electric) thinks is *really* important in a home: "...[B]etter living built in...electrical living with new comforts, new conveniences, new economies to make every day an adventure in happiness."⁴

After the “making do” decade of the Depression, this promise was especially alluring. And when the men who survived came marching home, Rosie the Riveter, who had become a skilled, well-paid worker, was sent home to wait for her kitchen—the promised land full of boxy, heavy, metal power tools for women.

Instead of keeping jobs that were needed for men who were assumed to be solo breadwinners, women were told that their job was now to push the nation’s unpaid domestic manufacturing capacity into full-production mode, to make babies and babkas using the tools

⁴ Image used with permission from the General Electric Company (GE).

of their trade—old and new; to make a family for a man to support. Mass-built post-war housing added more layers of rationality and uniformity to the homeplace: thousands and then millions of identical houses were built with identical materials and stocked with identical fixtures and appliances in which the new post-war families were to live. The ability to construct so many duplicate houses at once provided builders with remarkable economies of scale—they ordered massive quantities of lumber, hardware, and appliances, thus driving down their costs and elevating profits. The building boom also provided manufacturers with a smooth transition from wartime production to postwar commercial efforts. Long before hostilities ended, business strategists plotted how to maintain the momentum of war-fueled spending, and the construction of new homes with modern appointments seemed an apt choice (Hirose 1945). Economic health was the post-Depression, post-war goal. The reiteration of American individualism meant that people could and would move away from the necessity-driven crowding and collaborative efforts of economic scarcity and imminent danger into a plethora of little, independent castles: “Little boxes on the hillside, [...] all made out of ticky-tacky, and they all look just the same” (Reynolds 1961).

Jokes were told about men’s difficulty in finding their way home from work, walking into the wrong (identical) house, eating (an identical) supper, and getting into bed with the wrong (but identical) wife. Of course, the men must have been identical, too... This was seen as women’s domain—where they were to work, to do their job of revitalizing the nation’s families—as men had their domain—where they were to do their job of revitalizing the nation’s peacetime economy. Each gender had a functional workplace with open surfaces and storage areas, stocked with tools, and guided by a well-codified and well-documented set of skills that were promulgated by experts in the field.

Many of the newly skilled Rosie-the-Riveters had discovered that they liked to work in “men’s” areas—had gained respect, recognition, significant pay, and enjoyed the daily interaction with co-workers and peers as well as the feelings of fulfilling a purpose and being productive that went with their jobs. At the war’s end, they did not want (or could not afford) to be demobbed and relegated to a life of isolated, unpaid housework, so two-thirds of them stayed in the workplace, but in lesser-paying, lesser-prestige jobs deemed more suitable for women (“The Home Front” 2001). Other Rosies left their wartime jobs gladly, anticipating a return to “normalcy.” For each of these sets of abruptly unemployed or

underemployed women, the rational kitchen was an important symbol. For the disgruntled, it was a consolation prize, and for the contented (the grunted?), it was a reward for answering the call to arms and enduring long hours in difficult working conditions. For both, the new kitchen was a laboratory where they could approach food chores as domestic science, acting as nutritionists, applied chemists, materials engineers, purchasing agents, and sanitary engineers using their specialized equipment. The idea of the kitchen-as-laboratory was articulated by Frank Lloyd Wright as a tenet of forward-looking 20th-century design, keeping it apart from the “more livable...spaciousness” of the rest of a house: “So I declared the whole lower floor as one room, *cutting off the kitchen as a laboratory*” (my emphasis, quoted in Marsh 1989:518). Most importantly, this was a setting for the deployment of expert knowledge in an organized, scientifically grounded discipline. The heart of the home had been transformed into a workplace.

Gracefulness, legs, and the options of preference and placement that had been possible with moveable furniture were gone; instead the kitchen that emerged from post-war drawing tables and factories was functional, rational, and fixed in place. Walker (2002) identifies this as a juxtaposition of “modernism *against* domesticity” (my emphasis:827), and the immanent conflict was intentional:

The modern home was reconceived as a machine—a ‘machine for living in’: standardized, impersonal, and scientific (Le Corbusier [1927]1998). [...]Although purportedly gender neutral and universalist in its values, modernist domestic space was implicitly masculine, defining, and controlling, operating through surveillance and the ‘domination of the gaze’ (Colomina 1992, 112; Forty 2000) (Walker 2002:827).

The modern kitchen was efficient, utilitarian, and mass-produced. Its basic planning principles included:

...the concept of work centers, ample storage, work surfaces, and careful placement of equipment to reduce floor space and save steps. Three main centers were...defined—storage, involving cupboards and refrigerator; food preparation, dishwashing, and cleaning, centering on the sink; and cooking and serving areas which were centered near the range. The sink was conveniently located between the refrigerator and the range. Around these three centers were grouped cabinets and accessories, appropriate to each, with counters connecting them in a continuous working scheme, thus unifying all appliances with the work process and treating the kitchen as a harmonious whole (Celehar 1982, quoted in Plante 1995:237).

Metal, rather than wood, was the favored material for all kitchen components, including cabinets and countertops (Plante 1995:238), and efficiency was the hallmark of its modernity. This was key to the household's place in the burgeoning post-war economy. Such efficiency—"the capacity to diminish the effect of both time and space" (Isenstadt 1998)—was necessary to capitalist growth, both in the commercial world and the domestic one, according to Anthony Giddens: "[I]t is not an exaggeration to say that the expansion of capitalism... would not have been possible without the development of a range of techniques for the preservation and storage of perishable goods, particularly foods" (Giddens 1984). While they were built to house hard-working women, these kitchens and their appliances embodied the ideals and goals of industrialization and the production line which was filled with hard-working men. Not only had the look and the spirit of the kitchen been masculinized (which refers to the aesthetic and efficiency of the kitchen and its contents rather than to its intended use by or focus on one gender rather than the other), but its social value mostly reflected well on the men who earned the wherewithal to acquire these necessary luxuries. To be able to do so meant that one made good money and was on the upward path to the pot of gold at the end of the American rainbow. "The kitchen bursting with new gadgets and sleek, streamlined appliances represented a potent symbol of the superiority of American ways... and was a signifier of the American dream" (Inness 2001:144).

Embodied values in the "Wonder Kitchen"

For many who colonized the new suburban neighborhoods, achieving middle-class status was a prime goal. Interestingly, this did not necessarily involve home ownership, as renting seemed to be adequate for those who could not afford to buy. Research on patterns of home ownership in suburban housing developments shows that blue-collar workers were more apt to own their homes than were white-collar workers, who rented in far greater numbers (see Baxandall and Ewen (2000) for information on Long Island, NY, and Marsh (1989) for information on New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin). The important thing was to live in the right place, and location seemed to be the primary designator of class status, rather than property ownership or profession (Marsh 1989). The idea that joining the middle class could be achieved by moving to the suburbs was pushed hard by those who built

and marketed the cookie-cutter housing. Their pitch was aimed at city-dwellers (not those who already lived beyond the city's limits) who were crammed together in tiny apartments or tenements, and advertisements featured not merely a house, but almost always the magic combination of a house and new, brand-name kitchen appliances. Together, a new house and a modern kitchen gave access to the middle class, but neither one could do it alone. "The Levitts saw themselves as translators of modern architectural design for the masses, becoming the arbiters of a new middle-class style of life, ...[and they] insiste[d] that modern homes and appliances together make up 'the good life'..." (Baxandall and Ewen 2000:37, 32) (see Figures 11 and 12).

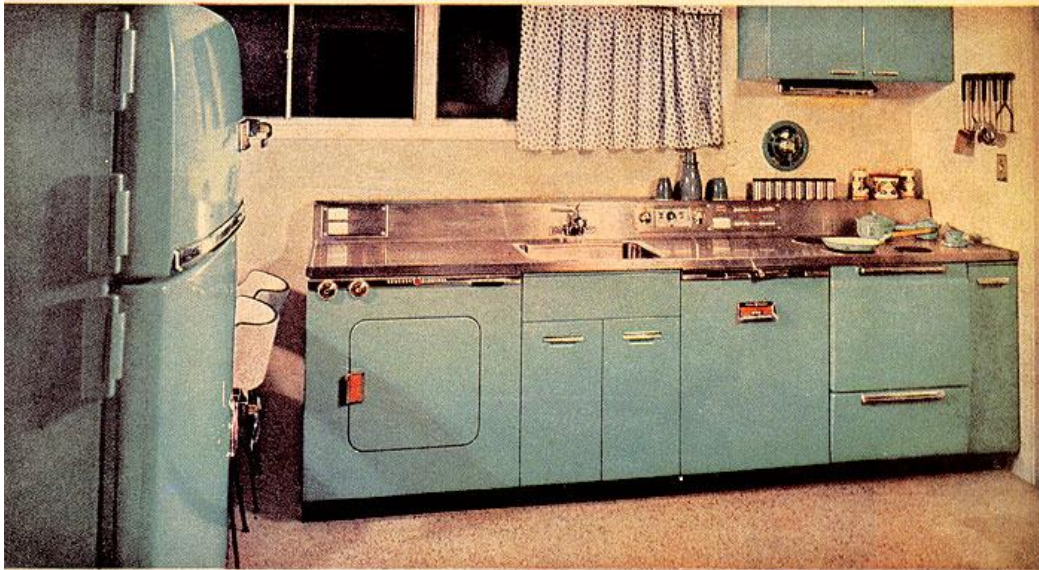
In this chapter, I focus largely on the Levitts as emblematic of postwar suburban developers for a number of reasons: 1) most of the *HMP*'s respondents lived in the geographic area in which Levitt was and is an overwhelming presence: Long Island, NY, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; 2) although other developers were active in other parts of the U.S., most of the specifications and techniques for mass-producing single-family housing were pioneered and implemented by the Levitts; and 3) in 1950, the sheer volume of Levitt's construction led *Time* magazine to say that the company had produced one in every eight American houses. This is, however, a necessarily limited consideration of the Levitts; for a more complete history and analysis, see Gans 1967, Checkoway 1977, and Kelly 1989. See also the State Museum of Pennsylvania's online exhibit: *Levittown, PA: Building the American Dream*.



Town-builder LEVITT previews the new 9½-foot wonder kitchen by General Electric

This is town-builder Bill Levitt, and area map of Levittown, Pa. When completed, this new community (between Philadelphia and Trenton) will house 70,000; contain 17,000 dwellings . . . with schools, churches, shopping centers and playgrounds—all pre-planned.

\$100 a month covers all taxes, interest, insurance and amortization for this beautiful new "Country Clubber" Levittown house. Complete price: \$17,500. Veterans pay \$1000 down; non-veterans \$2600. Included at no extra cost: new 9½-foot wonder kitchen by G.E., below.



When a woman goes house-hunting, the place she usually heads for first is the kitchen. This is where she spends so much of her day. This is where she's most likely to fall in love with the house, or reject it.

A man who fully realizes the import of this is the world's largest developer, William Levitt. He believes not only in a kitchen that captivates women at first sight, but one that—paradoxically—she spends less time in . . . one that does her tasks so

efficiently that she has extra hours each day for her family, friends or hobbies.

What you see here is the final design of the built-in custom kitchen-laundry center that both Levitt and General Electric agree offers today's woman more than any other conceived during the past quarter-century. (Mr. Levitt's association with General Electric goes back to 1939, the year G-E Refrigerators were first installed in his unique houses.)

The General Electric Kitchen Center will be in-

stalled in Mr. Levitt's finest Levittown, Pa. homes, and it will also be made available all over America, through local builders, G-E distributors and G-E dealers. In the words of one woman enthusiast, "It is the most magnificent, yet most sensible work-saver, space-saver and time-saver ever!"

General Electric Company, Appliance Park, Louisville 1, Kentucky.

GENERAL ELECTRIC

Automatic G-E Kitchen Center cooks food . . . flushes away food waste . . . washes dishes . . . even cleans and dries clothes!



Big, wide 21-inch oven . . . push-button controls . . . automatic oven timer, bake and broil units of range are fully enclosed. No open coils.

No more garbage pail. Wonderful General Electric Disposall® shreds food scraps (peels, coffee grounds, bones) in a twinkling.

Dishwasher makes short work of a daily chore. Messy dishes are never in sight. Washes and dries a full day's supply at once.

Wash day is fun day with this G-E Washer-Dryer. In go the dirty clothes . . . and out they come, cottons ready for ironing; synthetics ready to wear!

Refrigerator with Revolving Shelves that put all foods at fingertips is standard equipment in Levittown "Country Clubber" kitchens.

Figure 12: Another GE ad employs breathless prose ("This is where she's most likely to fall in love with the house... a kitchen that captivates women at first sight...") and the idea that machines replace human effort in an emotional-rational appeal to women.⁵

Obviously, the role of woman as fulltime caretaker and caregiver and the ideal of separate spheres were assumed by builders and probably expected by buyers, in which a

⁵ Image used with permission from the General Electric Company (GE).

woman did not have to work for wages, but instead could devote her time and enterprise to her family. In addition to decentralized, detached housing with an appliance-filled kitchen, this was another hallmark of middle-class status: a woman's labor benefited the larger society *through* her family because it was not necessary for her to earn money for subsistence; nevertheless, it must be noted that her labor made such subsistence possible. Although some considered the wageless woman to be "malintegrated" with society (defined as the workplace) (Parsons and Smelser 1956) and identified feelings of isolation and anxiety as the effects of public invisibility (Friedan 1964; Oakley 1974), others found that the conditions of (unwaged) self-employment in one's own household were often considered by the women themselves to be preferable to the underpaid alienation of occupations commonly accessible to women (Andersen 1997). But whether or not they worked for wages, then as now, women were expected to be the domestic labor force that produced sustenance, maintained health, and provided comfort for the others in their households (Hochschild 1989). It should be noted that acute gender segregation in domestic labor was and is more distinctive of white families than it is of African-Americans who tend to have a more egalitarian spread of responsibility for both income-earning and household chores (Collins 1990, 1991; MacAduo 1989).

The proliferation of high-power kitchens virtually demanded hours of food-related effort in each household; the expensive equipment was there to be used, and ignoring or under-using it would have seemed wasteful. So, despite marketing claims that less time would be spent in a more-efficient kitchen, both Ruth Cowan (1976) and Joann Vanek (1978) found little or no difference in the hours spent on food-related chores before and after a household acquired such technologies. The proportion of time spent on individual tasks did change—for instance, having a refrigerator/freezer enabled more food to be purchased, hence a longer time was spent on planning and food shopping, while less time was spent on canning. But, overall, there was no net saving of time, and Cowan suggests that food chores actually became more time-consuming because more complicated, finicky recipes could be made.

The promised saving of time and effort was a deception of advertising based on assumptions of convenience. But convenience, say Ellen Lupton and Jane Murphy, can be a two-edged sword, because:

...[it] is tied to labor. [...] Convenience is the network of objects, equipment, and service through which the housewife enacts her duties. ...Yet convenience can be inconvenient. Some of the standard phrases in the modern language of convenience have aimed to conceal evidence of labor in the home or to fetishize it into a rhetorical image of hyper rationality, stimulating rather than eliminating effort. The technologies of convenience typically are designed to comply with a rigid grammar of modularity and cannot be adjusted to meet the needs of the individual user (Lupton and Murphy 1994:86).

For each individual woman, the hours of daily food work were a substantively different use of time than might have occurred if community kitchens had become more widely available and a cooperative approach to family feeding had been possible. Communal kitchens have sprouted every now and then in the American homescape: various religiously based communities had them (both historic: the Amana colonies in Iowa and Harmony Society towns in Pennsylvania and Indiana, and contemporary: Hutterite colonies in the U.S. and Canada), and several feminist housing reformers have advocated them as ways to minimize women's individual efforts and time spent on food chores (Hayden 1978, 1981, 1984). Interestingly, even the most radical of these made gendered assumptions that the activities would be done by women rather than by women and men. But an aggressively individualist ideology of the American family and the profit-driven self-interest of builders and appliance manufacturers underlay suburban housing tracts, rather than any real consideration for the people who would live (and work) in the houses. As Herbert Gans noted, "The only deliberate planning vis-à-vis the eventual purchasers took place in marketing the house" (1967, quoted in Friedman 1995).

Thus, the combination of the "wonder kitchen" (a complete factory for domestic food production) within each suburban home and its embedded middle-class, race- and gender-specific prescriptions can be seen as a highly conservative, even retrogressive, influence. In an interesting consideration of exactly how important such an influence might be to women in particular, Beverly Gordon argues that since at least the mid-1800s, women and their houses were so closely identified with each other that, in many respects, they were seen or felt to be identical. This was a "...conceptual conflation between women's bodies and domestic interiors" (Gordon 1996:281). While in a previous generation the most "feminine" rooms in middle-class houses had been drawing rooms or parlors, the 20th century saw a shift

in identification “toward service areas such as the kitchen” (ibid:300); and—as detailed in previous paragraphs—their appearance changed to “emphasize... engineering rather than decoration and sanitation rather than ornament” (ibid:299). As the locus of identity shifted from genteel, public areas to a semi-private production center, the importance of the associated activities also changed within the norms of middle-class femininity. Rather than performing largely supervisory housekeeping with one or more servants, women did multiple, heavy-duty chores themselves. Just food production, for example, involved learning recipes for a variety of tastes—hearty food for family meals, daintier fare for ladies’ lunches, and high-status dishes for dinner parties—planning, shopping, prepping and cooking, then cleaning up the mess, and serving meals graciously and on time. All of this was laid forth in instructional literature that was directly aimed at women: cookbooks from their earliest form to those of the present both prescribe and reinforce what are considered to be appropriate combinations of recipes, preparation and serving techniques, and the people who should eat the results with the requisite utensils and demeanor, according to the conventions of the time. Not only were house and self conflated, but so were many roles that formerly had been distinct in a middle-class or bourgeois household: hostess and scullery maid, chief cook and bottle-washer; now one person did it all. The objective was to do it all *well*, to achieve and maintain the standards of one’s job, especially since this package of responsibility for caregiving was thought to be more than “just a job.” This idea is developed further in the discussion in Chapter Six about the development of domestic science as a disciplinary technology that standardized, objectified, and professionalized the daily enactment of food chores.

However much food chores had been repositioned as a set of logical tasks (that could, presumably, be done by anyone without reference to gender), an integral element ensured that, even though its philosophy had changed, the practical reality of responsibility for domestic food labor would stay the same. This was the inevitable inclusion and magnetic pull of emotional content and context. Although the kitchen and the job of food chores each underwent the same process of standardization and rationalization as had the industrial workplace and factory and manufacturing jobs, the resulting work profile was different. Efficiency was imposed on the paid workforce to eliminate individual expressiveness in favor of speed and uniform results. For the unpaid workforce, however, efficiency was

intended to promote speed so that individual expressiveness could be maximized. In other words, if one had good tools and logical methods that minimized effort, then one could invest more creativity—and emotion—in the product. Since this is done for other people—one’s family—then they benefit from the increased investment of emotion. As Ruth Cowan put it:

When industries become mechanized and rationalized, we expect certain general changes in the work force to occur: its structure becomes more highly differentiated, individual workers become more specialized, managerial functions increase, and the emotional context of the work disappears. On all four counts our expectations are reversed with regard to household work. [...] *...[I]nstead of desensitizing the emotions that were connected with household work, the industrial revolution in the home seems to have heightened the emotional context of the work* (my emphasis; 1976:23).

Within the rational environment of the streamlined kitchen, women were charged with fulfilling the clearly delineated battery of food chores in a standardized, sanitary environment while maintaining the traditional role for themselves and their kitchens as the emotional center of their households. The production of meals was key, but so was the production of emotional sustenance, and it was all tied inexorably to women.

Upon examination of the historic development of the suburbanized kitchen’s layout and contents, it appears that the reasons for the mono-aesthetic and its longevity are far from casual or random, as they include macro-level political and economic influences and pressures that have had profound micro-level effects. This is not a neutral phenomenon, but one that undoubtedly has a socially and politically structuring effect on the household and, I suggest, on individuals’ functions and interactions within it.

As noted previously, a key point of inquiry in *The Household Meals Project* was to look for factors that might help to explain why, despite the fact that a majority of dual-headed households have two full-time earners, the female partner is still responsible for most food chores, as was clearly shown in the *HMP*’s quantitative and qualitative evidence. By concentrating on the kitchen as a social space and its appearance as a major component, it has been possible to tease apart the various elements of usually ignored social reality that may influence behavior and reflect attitudes, but that are neither causative nor determinative. As Robert Zussman wrote, “A focus on people in places is, perhaps at the most abstract level, a way to look at both structure and agency, without assuming the priority of either” (2004:355).

This analysis suggests two key arguments: 1) That the “suburbanized” kitchen is a rational, industrialized domestic workspace that was produced by architects, developers, appliance manufacturers, and utility companies—all (mostly male) commercial institutions that had a huge financial interest in establishing a standard of desirability and necessity for their products to safely float them out of World War II production and into post-war profits. The “promise” of a new post-war wonder-kitchen was PR: advertising to build the desire and need, fitted to women's increased experience of industrial standards in wartime workplaces, and used as a lure or rationale to get them to return to a pre-war, somewhat idealized status quo. Rationalization of kitchens and limitation of moveability in appliances and other fittings had been a trend since the early 1930s, but it reached full flower in the postwar suburban building boom and has remained constant ever since.

2) The industrial look and the traditional “family center” orientation of kitchens are contradictory, or at least I find them so. There is no real resolution to this conflict. The idea of a kitchen is resoundingly organic and emotional, both in terms of its focus on food and as heart of the home; and it is the site of tasks and workers that are traditionally female. But its appearance is highly industrial, rational, and (as defined by aesthetic descriptors) masculinized. The “folk practices” of food production have been transmuted into a professionalized, health-related “occupation” that is specifically geared toward women. These changes have helped to position the function of unpaid domestic food-related responsibilities as skilled “work” in combination with rather than as an alternative to the function of wage-earning labor outside the home, so that it ties into a strong work ethic. In this society, “jobs” are mostly done in rational, standardized, fairly industrialized settings, and “women's work” in the kitchen is no exception. Women have long labored in masculinized spaces. My point is that this includes the home—most especially, the room that is traditionally considered to be women's territory: the kitchen.

All of these elements combine to configure the package of contemporary food-related chores into a praxis that “fits” particularly well into well-worn patterns of female socialization, the traditional cross-identification of women and food, and long-established parameters of “women’s work.” Together, these factors may act to sustain the somewhat-inexplicable phenomenon of continued gender imbalance in responsibility for domestic food-related chores, even as women and men edge ever-closer to parity in other household matters

such as employment, childcare, and other common concerns. As noted elsewhere, it must be stressed that the visual data can offer only suggestion and intriguing implications in support of these theses.

Social geographers have long argued that the configuration and composition of space has a significant effect on the social activities and interactions that take place within it, and vice versa (Urry 1985; Gregory 1985; Giddens 1985). The relationship of social space to social activity is a symbiotic one. This perspective is furthered by an argument that the configuration of space is, essentially, a political force that necessarily influences the social relations of those who inhabit it (Lefebvre 1976; Soja 1985), as is technology itself, which “reflect[s] the preferences of particular classes, individuals, or institutions” (McGaw 1982). The social predispositions of the suburbanized kitchen certainly include the assumptions of its designers, builders, and manufacturers, who were overwhelmingly male, about domestic food chores as well as the norm of the “typical” user: the “...body at work in the kitchen was female and northern European,” notes Joy Parr (2002:66). Little effort was expended on marking the possibility of different needs or uses for technology or kitchen configuration in non-white households or those that were not middle-class and/or located outside the northeastern United States. For instance, on a standard American stove, it is difficult to achieve the high heat levels that are required in Asian cooking, although some manufacturers recently have begun to offer an optional “high heat twin flame wok burner” (AGA website). Instead, the various professionals who were instrumental in formulating the suburbanized kitchen and its technology and disseminating instructions on their use “assume[d] that every household owned a vast array of domestic equipment and that every housewife possessed an enormous number of manufacturing skills...” (McGaw 1982:825) that she was willing to use not to save her own time and energy but to raise her family’s living standards. That food-related and other domestic chores constituted a full-time job, and that the person doing the job would be female was a fundamental tenet of kitchen design and development activities. The unchanging environment of the suburbanized, rational kitchen continuously reifies that construct. All of these details are important, as Ellen Pader writes, “Including the spatial dimensions of everyday actions...is imperative for understanding social change...[as] visible changes at the level of the home interact with societal changes as part of larger systems of meaning” (1993:114). One could speculate that it might have been easier to initiate,

implement, and sustain individual life changes that were related to larger social shifts—to adjust the responsibility for domestic food chores onto a more gender-equal basis—in a space that was, itself, changeable.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Analysis

This chapter examines the themes from the quantitative analyses, photographic evidence, and respondents' testimony that were presented in Chapters Three, Four, and Five and relates them to *The Household Meals Project's* research question: What factors lie behind the continuation of female responsibility for the majority of food-related chores in dual-headed households?

By quantifying the information from participants into expressions of frequency it was evident that, in *The Household Meals Project's* (HMP's) 150 households, women held the greatest level of responsibility for producing meals, shopping for food, putting groceries away, clearing after meals, and processing recyclable waste. Men were frequently involved in these chores, but except in rare instances, they only had primary responsibility for dealing with garbage. However, women were involved in garbage duties at a much higher rate than men were involved in other food-related activities; and, correspondingly, men were completely uninvolved in the other food tasks at higher rates than women's non-involvement in dealing with garbage. Thus, it is entirely safe to say that, among the households profiled in this study, food chores continued to be a gendered responsibility, weighted heavily toward women. This finding echoes those of other studies that focused on domestic food chores (DeVault 1991; Warde 1997; McIntosh & Zey 1998). The HMP's qualitative evidence offers some insight into why this inequitable distribution of responsibility is sustained and what factors may combine to keep it as a strong pattern of behavior. Because study participants were not selected randomly, and the inquiry's geographic scope was limited, it should again be noted that these findings are neither comprehensive nor generalizable, but they do offer insight into a complex and stubbornly persistent social imbalance.

The themes that were identified in respondents' remarks included, from women, a deep-seated feeling of personal responsibility for: supplying other household members with a daily necessity; using skills that had been learned (most often, throughout childhood) to ensure that the food that was eaten maintained and maximized both individuals' health and connections with their cultural heritage; and conveying their own love for their families. From men, thematic ideas included: willingness to help the primary food production person; recognition of another's expertise and acknowledgement of their own lesser skills; and

restatement of socially acceptable reasons why they were not suitable to carry the primary responsibility for food production in their households. From both women and men there were strong statements about how food was or was not involved in both their individual identities and their sense of identification with a group. As with the rates of completion of food chores, gender was strongly associated with issues of identity. In the following pages, each of these thematic ideas is explored in the context of how the households went about dividing responsibility for food chores, which yields a great deal of information as to why the allocations were configured as they were. Then, in this chapter's final section, these findings are melded into a comprehensive commentary.

The intense sense of personal responsibility for matters involving their household's choices, chores, and consumption of food that was expressed by many female respondents can also be understood to express a sense of ownership of these activities and the issues involved. The choice of edibles for oneself and others is, ostensibly, a simple task to find sufficient caloric intake to sustain life and activity. But, as many writers and researchers have pointed out, in contemporary society the choices of what foods to eat, at what times, how they are prepared, and by whom are all layered with conscious and unconscious imperatives. To touch on a few, these involve gender (DeVault 1991; Valadez and Clignet 1984; and others), health and longevity (Warde 1997), demonstration of love and support (Spain and Bianchi 1996), display and use of skills (Berger and Luckmann 1967), maximizing efficiency, strategies to avoid conflict, and, I would argue, some interesting nuances involving layers of power and personal identity. Each of these factors emerged in *HMP* respondents' remarks, and, for many households, not one but several were cited as congruent motives and explanations for how food work was divided and carried out. When, as found in this research, multiple elements are at play in the context of daily life, it might be expected that no single one will emerge as foremost, and participants' perception and reports of their circumstances are unlikely to separate the various threads clearly. This lack of clarity reflects respondents' familiarity with their own circumstances—perhaps so much familiarity that details blur and cannot be reported clearly—and a fair degree of non-reflexivity in their understanding of the dynamics in their household and interpersonal relations (Bittman and Pixley 1997). However, it is possible to tease apart some of the threads of personal and

group imperatives and arrive at some interesting insights, particularly with regard to the complexities of power in households.

INVISIBLE POWER: HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

One of the most striking aspects of respondents' remarks was the constant use of "It just happened that way" to explain how the division of responsibility for their households' food chores came to be. This statement typifies the muddled and often-unexamined nature of such arrangements. As detailed in Chapter Four, this statement was used in a variety of circumstances and usually indicated some degree of reliance on underlying and, perhaps, unexamined assumptions and expectations about who should be in charge of meeting the household's food needs. Respondents' remarks showed that when female PHs (principal householders) held the major responsibility for food chores, such assumptions included the idea that the traditional assignment of food tasks to women was natural, usual, and inevitable; that having the requisite skills and/or affinity for food-related activities was decisive; and that the burden was chosen by preference or taken on because no one else could or would do so. When male PHs held significant responsibility for all food chores except garbage duty, the factors underlying "It just happened that way" tended to be that individuals' schedules and availability made the choice obvious. For garbage detail, however, the fact of being male ("the man of the house") was crucial. Not surprisingly, for both men and women, these explanations conformed to traditional gender norms. For many women in this study, the inevitability of food work rested upon personal or innate factors: who they were, what they could do, and how they felt. By and large, when men cooked or did other food chores, the important elements that enabled them to take charge of tasks that were traditionally positioned as "women's work" were those that could be seen as external to themselves, part of objective reality rather than intrinsic to the self. But garbage duty, said by many to be a "manly" chore, was based on the male physique and orientation toward performing outdoor chores—in other words, who they were and what they could do, much similar to the traditionally gendered chores for women. Such formulaic constructions owe more to "normative views on everyday married life," than they do to a conscious choice of action, according to Aafke Komter, who identifies "It just happened that way" as a non-causal explanation or "legitimation":

The truths contained in them serve primarily to justify the situation as it has evolved. Because they are largely taken for granted, legitimations contribute forcefully to the perception of daily reality as unchangeable and inevitable and so become part of invisible power (1989:210).

I believe that the concept of invisible power, as Komter terms it, is key to understanding the complex structure of domestic food work. With so many elements at play in the construction of the normative, or routine, in each household, invisible reality can act as a cloak for the operation of unspoken expectations and assumptions about one's own activities and those of others, and it provides deep cover for elements of inequity that might cause friction if they were dealt with directly. However, if there appears to be an inevitability to certain circumstances or arrangements, "seems like it was instinct" (G13), then conflict can be avoided, and the "correctness" of the lines drawn by this invisible power is reified and reinforced, as noted in these statements by respondents: "Just happened that way. It's understood that the mother will prepare meals—no discussion, simply unknown" (D4nyc67); "...everyone has an understanding of what needs to be done, and they don't ask questions" (V4); "It's an unwritten rule. There's not much disagreement about any household chores" (O4).

Legitimation can work both ways when responsibility is parceled out, as inevitability can be ascribed to minimal- or non-involvement: "It [cooking, shopping and clean-up] just happened that way because of traditional values of the females doing domestic work" (H14nj4)—implying that men do not; "It [taking garbage out] just happened that way, because he's the only man in the house!" (G21nyc97)—implying that women cannot or should not. Equally, legitimation can be used to ratify the wielding of active involvement, both in decision-making and activity: "It just happened that way because the mother took the responsibility" (M7nyc55); "Clive feels that taking care of the garbage is his responsibility innately" (F7). The "inevitability" of each path serves as its own justification: it just happens that way because that's the way it happens.

Another function of invisible normativity that may serve to limit conflict in households is described as "pseudomutuality" (Wynne, et al. 1967, cited in Bittman and Pixley 1997), in which household members fictionalize the degree to which each is involved in common chores. Bittman and Pixley write, "Pseudomutuality is a faked or a false complementarity, where the actor may deny or conceal evidence of non-mutuality in order to

maintain a sense of reciprocal fulfillment” (1997:146). Obviously, the strategy of pseudomutuality can be practiced by both sides in an uneven situation: the person who does more may limit her/his accounting of time and effort spent (Bittman and Pixley 1997), while the person who does less may magnify her/his involvement, as Komter found: “Husbands underestimated their wives' share in household tasks... Their own contribution was correspondingly overestimated. These gender differences were greatest, ...particularly when the wife had no paid job” (1989:209). Similar findings were reported by Coltrane (1996, 2000), Komter (1989) and Thompson (1993). In either case, the fictionalized reality can be employed to minimize tensions stemming from uneven performance of household activities.

Both familiar and elusive, the presence and persistence of such invisible power and the blurring of disparate effort through pseudomutual fictions can also blunt, delay, or circumvent an impulse toward change. While a shift in a key person's circumstances may pose a challenge to the household's routines and, logically, might lead to an adjustment in chore assignments, any real change may be muted or even blocked by the entrenched nature of the activities. Such an occurrence is detailed in this account by a woman whose chore-set was established while she was a stay-at-home mother; though her working life has changed since then, the chores did not: “When [Sarah] returned to work, kitchen labor was shared more, but the brunt still remains on her. She does all the cooking, which becomes increasingly stressful, but things have not changed much in that department” (D7nyc70). It sounds as though some shift in responsibility for food production occurred, but not enough to balance the other changes in her daily life.

The existence and operation of pseudomutuality and legitimation as invisible powers within households and intimate relationships is no news, as many researchers and theorists have already outlined it (Bittman & Pixley 1997; Komter 1989; and others). What is revealed by this current inquiry, however, is how pervasive it is throughout the *HMP* households' allocation of responsibility for all types of food chores. Power of any kind—visible or invisible, macro or micro—has a profound effect on those who are involved in its workings. As a notable force in the enactment of daily life, the invisible power of the food-related norms detailed here manifests a profound gender imbalance, and it reaches far beyond the mundanities of food.

Logically, the preponderance of this sort of power accrues more strongly to women than it does to men, both in terms of obligation and influence or importance. In other words, as women are predominantly held and/or hold themselves responsible for planning, making decisions about, and implementing household meals, they inevitably make decisions about much more than “just” food, as their choices involve nutritional sufficiency, quality, and preference for everyone in the household. Homans’ understanding of power in intimate relationships is particularly applicable here:

Differentiation of power, authority, and persuasion (influence) seem to map very well to distinct operational indices. Particularly, power and authority are delineated according to the location of control in the exchange. Thus, the spouse in power controls the outcomes of the other spouse or family members (Homans 1974, cited in McDonald 1977:612).

The processes of food choice and production, which affect the daily lives, well-being, sustained health, and longevity of all who are subject to these decisions, put the person who wields them into a position of substantial power—both in terms of making the decisions and in others’ perception that this is the rightful and best person for the job. As delineated by Salafios-Rothschild, these two elements should be viewed as distinct, rather than as parts of the same factor.

Most research has conceptualized and operationalized family power as if it were synonymous with decision-making. ... However, decision-making is only one aspect of the ongoing power dynamics in the family. Along with decision-making, the major components of power are influence and authority. ... Authority is the existence of cultural or social norms designating an individual as the “rightful” person to make decisions or to be the most powerful one (Salafios-Rothschild 1970:611-12).

The position of principal food-person for a household carries with it a large measure of authority within the family and control over the content of individuals’ experiences, both day-to-day and over time. In Salafios-Rothschild’s view, the role of making decisions, especially for others and continuously over years, can be seen as a powerful position within a small group. Holding that role by right—as the principal person in one’s context who *should* make these decisions and has the skills to do so—constitutes possession of authority by consent of those who are subject to the decisions, and it ratifies both the power and the person who wields it.

The usual possession of this seat of power by women in family groups should not be underestimated, and it is often overlooked, particularly as other, more obvious forms of power—economic and occupational advantage—have traditionally been held by men. While the latter are, in bankable terms, worth more and, thus, gain greater public prestige and attention from scholars, the importance and vitality of the former must be acknowledged. McDonald said as much when he complained of an “overemphasis in family power literature on economic or tangible resources rather than the more intangible, interpersonal rewards and resources” (1977). However, in light of the *HMP*’s evidence, I would argue that holding the most-determinative position in a family with regard to food choice and consumption is hardly intangible, particularly as each individual’s health and longevity are commonly held to be dependent on what foods are eaten (as discussed at greater length later in this chapter). Nevertheless, McDonald makes an important point: that most outlines of the structure and dynamics of power within families (or households) are unfortunately simplistic—the layers, cross-currents, and different kinds of power that accrue to various members and in varying circumstances are often passed over; germane to this point are many analyses of domestic food practices (DeVault 1991; Bell and Valentine 1997; Tichenor 1999; and others) that fail to see how these activities generate power. One study (Valadez and Clignet 1984) theorized that expertise in matters relating to daily food choices and consumption might be viewed by women as a source of authority and control, but it did not engage in a thoughtful exploration of how such influence was constituted, which seems fundamental to understanding its staying power in daily life.

A perspective that seems entirely relevant is that expressed by Foucault, who viewed power as an intrinsic and omnipresent component of most reality, and not generally a negative one:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault 1984a:61, cited in Lupton, 1997).

By viewing household power as just such a productive network, it is possible to deconstruct and relate it to food practices in order to see how some of the important factors expressed by

HMP respondents are intrinsic to this issue. Centers, et al. (1971) investigated personality as partially determining the power structure of the family. In their work, six variables were cited as affecting relative power: 1) role patterning, 2) personality, 3) cultural factors, 4) control of valued resources, 5) relative competence, and 6) relative involvement. If one looks at the evidence gathered from *HMP* respondents, it appears to offer ratification through at least four (perhaps five) of these six variables that women—who, it has been well-established, are still predominantly in charge of food matters for their households—derive significant amounts of power from these responsibilities. In terms of role patterning, it is clear that in many *HMP* households girls are trained in the techniques and necessities of food production as a vital part of becoming a woman, while boys tend to be less involved in food chores. Cultural factors are important in terms of what foods are eaten, how they are prepared, which foods serve to reiterate a family's cultural identity and heritage, and how the household presents itself in a social context. As has been pointed out in other research, women mostly manage the culturally specific matters in their households (Smart 2007; Warde 1997; McIntosh and Zey 1998; Mann 1994). Relative competence in the expertise and techniques of domestic food choice and preparation—as a professionalized praxis (also discussed more fully later on)—is another female-dominated area, and it is frequently cited as an important reason why women *do* hold these responsibilities and, contrarily, why men do not. Relative involvement is a factor that seems mostly to stem from relative competence, at least with regard to domestic food work, but the high level of involvement by women is also due to a feeling of obligation—that these responsibilities must be carried out despite a strong distaste for doing so, as was expressed by many female respondents. Together, these elements compose a strong and multi-faceted framework of household power. To be sure, the relative importance of each factor varies by household, but, both individually and in ensemble, they provide a stable and entrenched source of the power and prestige that are traditionally held and wielded by women.

At this point, it might be wise to insert a note of caution into this discussion of domestic power as it relates to food choice and production for a household. Exploration of this topic has been the basis of much scholarly interest, from Catharine Beecher (1841) and Kurt Lewin (1943, both cited in McIntosh and Zey 1998) to Johnson (1961), Thompson (1993), Smart (2007), and many others, and the practical importance of women's dominance

in food matters for their families has been used both to highlight its ubiquity and to cite it as a counterweight to male dominance in all other areas of prestige and control of resources. As Carole Counihan put it, “Patriarchal Western society...defines [women’s] role within the family as nurturer and food provider...” (1998:113). McIntosh and Zey continued: “[W]omen’s status was determined primarily through the performance of domestic roles. Important among these roles were the acquiring, storing, preserving, and preparing of food for family consumption” (1998:127). Earlier articulations of the idea that distinct forms of authority and power are embedded in this role and its activities tended to use it to justify social limitations on women’s access to other, more-recognized forms of cultural and financial capital:

Do you ever think, while in the midst of a pile of dirty dishes, ...“Wasn’t I made for better things than this?” And if we listen, the answer seems to echo and re-echo throughout the house: The routine work we do in our homes every day makes life secure and happy and orderly for those we love the most. The biggest hurdle we have to cross is our approach to our daily tasks (Johnson 1961:15).

The signal difference between those justifications for the status quo and the current exploration of why women are still largely responsible for domestic food chores is one of approach: mine is a fundamentally feminist argument that recognizes the significance of tangible forms of power and authority, skill sets, and ascribed responsibility to those who traditionally hold and wield them. Their importance to individual women may even be magnified by the continuing difficulty they face in achieving equal access to lucrative, fulfilling employment, political influence, and other forms of public power and prestige. Crucially, this argument does not offer any justification for exclusion—neither of women from male-dominated activities and ambitions, nor of men from those usually held by women. It does seek to unravel the complexities of identity, influence and expectation that underlie the pragmatic realities of everyday experience and to show how the reach and hold of food-related imperatives intensified throughout the second half of the 20th century, rendering any shift to a more gender-equal distribution of these responsibilities even more difficult.

In order to understand more fully and through empirical evidence the various aspects of the power grid that are embedded in household food chores, it is useful to explore them in

relation to the feelings, issues, and circumstances that were expressed in respondents' comments. Such an examination also facilitates an appreciation of how fundamental this configuration of power is to respondents' habits and preferences. Specifically, the following sections discuss: how health is involved and has become increasingly important in domestic food concerns; the continuing inter-generational transmission of food work as a vital part of gender identity for girls; how food seems to be differently implicated in personal identity for women and men; and the development and proliferation of domestic food practices as a disciplinary technology (Foucault 1979) that simultaneously instructs and controls.

“We’re in charge of the health...” (Tamisha, F1)

Intrinsic to the contemporary approach to food, particularly in the U.S. and the U.K., is a co-mingling of food with health and longevity. “That diet affects health is beyond question,” declared food scholar Marion Nestle (2003:1). This assertion and the belief it reflects—that not only are we what we eat, but also that our food intake is fundamental to maintaining good health, avoiding disease, and achieving a long life—are emblematic of the late-20th/early-21st century mindset with regard to edibles. While nutritious and adequate food has long been understood to be crucial to sustained vigor and individual productivity, as well as an important factor in recovery from illness, a widespread public focus on good health through better eating is a phenomenon that intensified during the latter 20th century and continues to date:

[T]he assumption that [a person] would routinely eat healthily reflects one of the most striking developments in recent representations of food. In 1968 health was rarely alluded to in cookery columns [in British magazines]. ...Healthiness was not an issue, even to the extent that there was little appeal to the functional aspect of nutrition (Warde 1997:79-80).

This contemporary catechism includes a credo that good health is dependent on good nutrition, that one's risk of contracting such serious maladies as cancer, diabetes, and others may be minimized or avoided altogether by correct dietary intake, and that eating the proper foodstuffs, in proper amounts, prepared in the proper ways will lengthen one's lifespan. Through this perspective, food and eating have become increasingly medicalized—a trend in the United States, particularly, that has developed in conjunction with the surge in interest in international cuisine and techniques by the consuming public, along with the increased

availability of food items from far-flung locales at all times of year. It should be noted that the medicalization of food can be seen as a trend that has proceeded independently of food-as-hobby—these movements are allied, but they run on their own distinct tracks. Indeed, as foodies eagerly explore new cuisines and avenues of supply, food scholars and others have taken a stance that is critical of the growth of the corporate food industry, the proliferation of mass-produced foodstuffs, and the effects of polysyllabic, artificial food additives on the public health (Nestle 2002; Hart 2002; Brownell 2003). Nestle (2002) and Anne Keane document how government regulation of food products and promulgation of nutritional advice have been “shaped by the interests of the food industry, [while] the responsibility for healthy eating has been placed on the consumer” (Keane 1997: 176). However, little scholarly attention has been paid to the medicalization of home-produced food, although it is well-represented in the popular media (Pollan 2009, 2008, 2006; Schlosser 2001; Weber 2009; and others). The titles alone describe this phenomenon: *Food Is Your Best Medicine: How Proper Food, Individually Selected for Your Particular Needs, Will Preserve Your Health and Extend Your Life* (Bieler 1966); *Food as Medicine: How to Use Diet, Vitamins, Juices & Herbs for a Healthier, Happier, and Longer Life* (Khalsa 2002); and *Food: Your Miracle Medicine: How Food Can Prevent and Cure Over 100 Symptoms and Problems* (Carper 1993), to name but a few. As might be expected, the spread of this point of view through these and similar books, as well as publications and appearances by such popular health experts as Dr. Andrew Weil (*Eating Well for Optimum Health*, 2000; Weil and Daley, *The Healthy Kitchen*, 2002; and others) and television’s Dr. Oz (“Ask Dr. Oz”) has had a tremendous impact on home food production and consumption. As detailed in Chapter Four, many HMP respondents expressed a keen interest in eating healthy foods: “We try to keep it healthy overall” (U5). “As long as they are healthy methods of preparing food—no frying, no high-fat foods—those are the things that are important, because they are healthy” (G22). “The whole family depends on the wife, and she decides what and how the meal will be prepared. The wife does consider health and nutritional value in the food she prepares. Both the kids think that fattening foods are bad” (M17).

Low income is often correlated with poor nutrition in research on poverty and diet, due to a lack of access to fresh or minimally processed foods combined with inadequate cooking facilities and time (Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk 2008; Dobson, et al. 1994). Nutritional

information is apparently not in short supply, however, as a concern about eating healthily was evidenced by *HMP* respondents at all income levels. The scarcity of healthy food clearly was stressful to Beata, who obtained about half of her family's groceries from charitable food pantries: "What the hell good is that? Even if you go to these places at the churches, they don't give you milk, they don't give you eggs, they don't give you orange juice, they don't give you grapefruit juice, they don't give you fruit. These are things people need to stay healthy. You can't just live on peanut butter and cans of tuna fish" (B1).

Appearing to be healthy was also mentioned as a factor: "Vegetables, lean meats, and healthy breads. To my parents, these foods show that a person is healthy, so that's why they eat them. ...Both of them said that cooking healthy is important to how a family looks and is seen by others" (V12nyc25). Warde identifies the use of food to promote health as more than a personal search for wellbeing. It can also serve as a signal to others that one is on point with the latest of fashion trends: maintaining a healthy body. "[T]his is a system of self-discipline of the body, of self-control, of self-monitoring, with a view to maintaining the appearance of good health" (Warde 1997:93-4). This perspective suggests that by absorbing and observing the rules for healthy eating, individuals and family groups show that they are acting as responsible members of society—not willfully doing things (such as eating too much or the wrong kinds of foods) that might cause disruption through illness, which can cause loss of function and productiveness and necessitates special accommodation by others and the expense of healthcare. Like other disciplines of the body, healthy eating can be seen as a Foucauldian form of self-surveillance (Foucault 1979), "a disciplinary power that provides guidelines about how [people] should understand, regulate and experience their bodies" (Lupton 1997:99), and it is a distinct part of the phenomenology of contemporary, everyday life.

While the concern to eat healthfully was expressed by many of my respondents, it was also clear from their remarks that the person most responsible for food matters tended to be both trusted with and held to the task of ensuring a steady supply of food that was considered to be healthy. "Ben agrees with Gina's ideas and knows that the foods chosen are healthy for him" (J4nyc80). "[H]e knows that I know more about nutrition than he does. There probably is an element of trust there" (A1).

Other research has found that women are more likely than men to be concerned with how health is impacted by the foods eaten and to make choices for themselves and others accordingly (Keane 1997). Warde found gender to be strongly associated with concerns about healthy food: “Being a woman...significantly prompted the healthy choice” (1997:82). Men, on the other hand, did not actively pursue unhealthy food, but they tended not to be actively involved in limiting it, either. “Men often described dietary changes, such as reducing fat intake, as part of their female partner’s agenda rather than their own...” (Keane 1997). This stance was also evident among some male *HMP* respondents: “My wife is very much concerned about cholesterol because it is in her family. So she tries to avoid sometimes making desserts and sweets for me that I’m interested in. She doesn’t make those things because she is concerned. And she puts more vegetable oil in the food, she tries to avoid that I should eat butter, for example. She is quite aware of those things” (Basir, C1). For one man, health did not factor at all into his choice of foods: “Jerry doesn’t care whether something is good for him or not. ... He kinda says, ‘I’m gonna eat what I want to eat, and if it kills me, it kills me’” (G1). These statements appear to reiterate other researchers’ findings that healthy food is largely pursued by women.

However, it is interesting to note that for some male *HMP* respondents, particularly those who did a large amount of the food production in their households, opting for healthy foods was important:

I think Ken likes feeling that he’s taking care of me. He’s very energized by it...he does dinner almost every night. I think my having had breast cancer...it made us sit up and take notice. We’re semi-vegetarian, and he’s very aware of what we eat (H1).

The main reason my father puts so much emphasis on the food preparation when I am home is because he thinks that college nutrition puts a big strain on my body and therefore when I am home he feels responsible for keeping me healthy and in good shape whenever he has a chance. But whenever I’m not eating at home, my father doesn’t put as much effort into cooking and food preparation... He doesn’t put enough nutritional care into what he’s having, in contrast to when he’s preparing a meal for both of us (Y18nyc11).

In both of these instances, the male PH held primary responsibility for preparing the household’s main meal, and health considerations were important factors in their food choices. It is evident from these remarks that both men incorporated health concerns into

their food work as part of their care for others. This suggests that an emphasis on healthy food is more strongly related to the caregiving role than to gender alone. The fact remains that women do most household food work, and they tend to voice concerns about healthy food. Other household members benefit from that emphasis and, perhaps, feel that the issue has been adequately addressed; so, for their own part, it can be safely ignored. But from the comments above, it seems clear that choosing healthy food is a vital part of the main food preparer's task, and the issue undoubtedly is important to whoever fills that role.

Other researchers have assumed that food-related decisions generally are subject to the influence of greater external status: that the partner (usually male) who earns more has the most say in what foods are eaten (McIntosh and Zey 1989; Komter 1989). This argument presumes that all food-related activity takes place in full view of both partners and can be approved or not, as wished. But my respondents frequently reported that food decisions were made unilaterally by the person who produced the meals. The mandate to choose and provide healthful food that is held by the principal food-person in each household appears to serve, in some instances, as an absolute and non-negotiable trust that justifies subterfuge. While efforts were made to satisfy others' tastes and preferences, the most important factor was felt to be fulfillment of the obligation to provide healthy food—overtly, if possible, but covertly, if not.

I'm not gonna have somebody in my house and cook for them and serve them poison [food with high fat content]. I can't do it. Like, I'm going to serve you something that I know that is, at least, is good for you in some way. I'm going to use a little whole-wheat flour in addition to the regular flour and sneak a little something better... I do that with everything. I feel better about it. ...I feel like I'm doing the right thing that way (A1).

Last night, I put collard greens on my daughter's plate, and I didn't tell her they were collard greens. I was actually going to, and I just pulled a little bit...and then she said to me, "What a cute little salad!" ...because it looked a little like lettuce. And I thought, "Oh, good. She thinks it's just salad." ...And I still never told her it was collard greens or healthy (I1).

In these instances, the cooks displayed the real power that is inherent in domestic food work. Acting according to the dictates of healthful eating—an expertise they felt could produce desirable outcomes—they imposed their will on others despite anticipated opposition, and they wielded their nutritional skill *sub rosa* as a way of enacting what they

believed to be right and best, rather than as an act of resistance to others' authority.

“Maximiliane Szinovacz (1987:652) defines power as the ‘net ability or capability of action to produce or cause intended outcomes or effects, particularly on the behavior of others, or on others’ outcomes. Power gives people the capacity to make things happen...’” (cited in Counihan and Kaplan 1998:138). Even though food-related chores are often performed for others and, as such, are categorized as caregiving activities, the above and other testimony from *HMP* participants makes it apparent that those who are primarily responsible for these matters derive a strong and definable sense of personal clout from their position and abilities.

As the conflation of food with concerns about health and longevity has intensified during recent decades, it has tied into another caregiving role that is most frequently filled by women: as the proponent of medical care for members of their households. Women have traditionally been in charge of healthcare for their families (Robinson and Hunter 2008), and food work is a distinct element of it: “Ensuring food intake was a primary concern of household health care and involved deciding on the diet, preparing the food...” (Cabr e 2008). As previously outlined, the current approach to nutrition holds that, beyond mere caloric sufficiency, the food itself—what it is, how it was grown and processed, and how it is prepared for eating—has a medical impact on those who consume it. The emphasis is largely preventative rather than palliative, aiming to avoid illness and lengthen life. Wold, et al., found this perspective to be widely held: “[A] majority of women and men believe that dietary factors (too much fat in the diet, lack of fruits & vegetables, food additives) can cause various forms of cancer: colorectal, prostate or breast cancer” (2005:118). In this view, a meal is not just fuel for current effort, but it is also a building block of future reality, which imbues the daily task of producing food with even more significance and trust. It is apparent that such a responsibility is felt keenly by *HMP* respondents, including Tamisha, who said, “We’re [women are] in charge because your health is important. Anything you put in your body. It's what builds health. You can put things and destroy your health, and you can put things and build your...good health. So we are in charge. We're in charge of the health” (F1). Again, while such concerns are not intrinsically gendered, they are expressed more often by women, who overwhelmingly perform the range of food work for their households, and individual women, like Tamisha, seem to feel that the issue and responsibility for ensuring healthful eating are key parts of their gender ideology. Such activities, which have evolved

beyond simple tasks into a discipline, are “technologies of the body,” according to Monica Green (2005:3), and they have become codified into a system of expertise that provides instruction, establishes proficiency, and shapes activity and identity.

While the intertwining of food and health grew exponentially during recent decades, it continued a much longer trend in which home cooking, in particular, was molded into a professionalized structure of methods and mechanics that is guided by a philosophy of efficiency and excellence: in short, it developed into a *praxis* of domestic food production.

Efficiency, nutrition, and care

Since the early 1900s, home economists developed and disseminated techniques to ensure the optimal outcomes of maximum efficacy and healthfulness for domestic chores (Plante 1995:173), and, as noted in Chapter Five, the rational kitchen was designed to be a fitting workplace for women who were employed in their implementation. In this effort, some of the same efficiency experts who studied factories and manufacturing plants in order to increase their productivity also tackled the homeplace and its activities—most notably, Dr. Lillian Gilbreth (Graham 1999). In 1925, she wrote: “The search for the One Best Way of every activity, which is the keynote today in industrial engineering, applies equally well to home-keeping and raising a family” (quoted in Graham 1999:633). The object was to come up with a set of standards and techniques for precise, efficient completion of chores with reproducible results and to establish domestic science (a.k.a. unpaid housework) as a fully vested partner to other (male and paid) forms of work.

In other words, homemaking underwent a transformation of its intergenerational transmission of traditional methods through development of a disciplinary technology (the idea is from Foucault) of outside experts and expertise. Such a disciplinary technology organizes and instructs, includes some aspects of knowledge and excludes others; it is necessarily constructed according to the values of its originators, and it establishes a “right way” and a “wrong way” to do things. A disciplinary technology is developed by “expert” practitioners and learned by others who then use its strictures and guidance as an internal, self-imposed and self-monitored regulatory system. Exceptionally powerful because they act simultaneously as systems of knowledge and practice and sets of *desiderata*, Jana Sawicki writes that disciplinary technologies

...secure their hold not through the threat of violence or force, but rather by creating desires, attaching individuals to specific identities, and establishing norms against which individuals and their behaviors and bodies are judged and against which they police themselves ... They aim to render the individual both more powerful, productive, useful and docile... (1991:67-8).

They are located and operate within social institutions, such as the complicated relationships in families and households, as well as through individuals' everyday lives and habits. Sandra Bartky notes that such disciplinary technologies, or systems of expertise, subjugate by establishing competencies and norms that are then sought as desirable skills and goals for individual use (1990).

It is easy to see that food-related tasks fulfill this definition, especially as they have come to include *dicta* for maintaining good health through nutritional awareness. As was discussed previously, this perspective inserts a medical component into the underlying structure of daily food practices. Making sure one eats a “balanced” diet is felt to be a serious matter—even more important than the necessity for mere caloric sufficiency. “Yeah, I am very, very into having a balanced meal. I want to make sure I have more than my share of veggies in a meal, and know that I’m eating right” (Alice, A1). The nutritional aspect of food work further establishes it as an expertise, and not one that easily can be shared or shifted elsewhere.

Like, I’ll look at a meal and I’ll say, “Where can I put more vegetables into this meal?” He doesn’t have that thinking yet. And I don’t expect it to happen overnight, but we’ve been together almost 10 years. I’m surprised he hasn’t gotten that on his own yet (A1).

Over and over again in the *HMP* interviews, I heard statements that when the “other” partner (the one who did less of the daily food work) was in charge of producing food for everyone, it was likely to be something that was considered to be “unhealthy,” both unsuitable and undesirable for frequent consumption (this occurrence was reported in the same way by both partners independently, so it was obviously a shared judgment). Thus, nutritional expertise adds yet another institutionalized component to the multiple layers of domestic food competency.

While the advent of expert techniques and advice in domestic practices de-skilled ordinary women to some extent, many traditional ways of doing household tasks—especially cooking—were not discarded, but, instead, the new methods joined the old to form a melded

whole that was both traditional and modern, improvised and scientifically precise, freighted with cultural memory and meaning, and laden with directives for ensuring one's family's (and the nation's) health and well-being. This charge was felt strongly, especially when children were involved. Charles and Kerr (1989) found that, irrespective of social class, mothers felt responsible and guilty for the good and/or bad eating habits and health of their families. This present research indicates that women who are not mothers also feel responsible in the same way for everyone else in their households (as discussed in Chapter Four). The melding of traditional techniques and expectations and up-to-date *dicta* yielded an enormous body of knowledge and responsibility that was placed squarely on women's shoulders; this was a job like no other. Within the rational environment of the streamlined kitchen (detailed in Chapter Five), women were charged with fulfilling the professionalized, standardized, expert-driven process of food chores while retaining the traditionally strong emotional motive and mandate—all of it tied to their gender identity. It was not a radical shift; women had long expected to and been expected to provide a variety of caring services for their families; and this workload had been thoroughly conflated and naturalized with being female to the point of functioning as an ideology rather than a neutral set of tasks (Kroska 2000; McMahon 1999). But within that ideology of feminized provision of sustenance, the promulgation of expert standards and techniques and the overlay of desirable health outcomes *plus* the common availability of the rational kitchen *cum* workplace put a new spin on the same old chores: they became a “real” job, disciplined by the professionalized rules and expectations of domestic science, medicalized nutrition *and* the provisions and prescriptions of industrialized kitchen configuration.

“It’s a feeling of just doing it and feeling good about yourself...” (Kitty, D1)

As detailed by DeVault (1991), emotions (both positive and negative) are key ingredients of domestic food production, both for the practitioners and the recipients. Acting as a double-edged sword, the emotional content can be both imperative and payoff, spurring and sustaining effort to meet the inevitability of need, and providing an intangible but highly valued reward for substantial effort. As *HMP* respondent Vivian put it, “There’s a lot of effort put into a home-cooked meal. Any of our home-cooked meals increase happiness. People seem more content” (G22). This phenomenon and its inherent contradictions were

well-noticed by the experts who shaped home economics, as an intensely emotional investment and experience for the (female) caregiver was clearly stated as a goal of modern methods:

If the housewife can learn to master all this [daily routine] then she can win through to what she most earnestly needs: self respect and a high regard for her own activities in the home. With this, and with the knowledge of her responsibilities and capabilities, *she will ensure for herself a new pleasure in her work, which will change from grinding routine to joyful creativity*, so that she will feel her calling to be worth quite as much as any other profession (my emphasis; Meyer 1928, quoted in Bullock 1988: 183).

Arlie Hochschild (1985, 2003) and others have pointed out that there is often an emotional component to *any* work that is identified as women's, whether paid or not, and this differentiates it from work traditionally identified as men's. Food chores are no exception. When done at home for one's nearest and dearest, then food-related work is loaded with emotion, and it is usually done by women, day after day and without pay. The same tasks done for strangers in a commercial kitchen are not only largely unemotional, but they have usually been done by men for pay. The tasks and skill-sets are similar, but the symbolic content is different. This difference in job description is crucial, because it puts the work of domestic food chores into its own category of specialization and expertise; not one that replaces or can be replaced by paid employment, but rather one that can be performed in addition to it. This accords with a reconceptualization of work—particularly that done by women—as a “multidimensional continuum” (Wright 1995:218) of various kinds of labor done in tight sequence and/or simultaneously: “...many times women do multiple kinds of work *at the same time*—not just household *or* market [waged] work, but household *and* market work, and chickens besides” (emphasis in original; *ibid*:231). This was quite clearly stated by the women I interviewed: bringing in income for the household was necessary, as was ensuring sufficient and healthy food, so one did all of this on a daily basis—like it or not.

I don't have much choice. I gotta go to work and do everything that needs to be done there, and then I gotta come home and make sure we have a decent meal. It's two different kinds of work, and they're both important, and they're both mine. Sometimes I'd rather stay at work to finish up some things and let everybody scrounge in the fridge—if they would. And sometimes I'd rather skip work and stay home and make banana bread or try something new. But it's not about what I want, it's about what needs to be done when it needs to be done. Maybe when I retire...(laughs) (Joy, O2).

The internalized work ethic that drives most Americans permits little deviation or delegation of such keenly felt responsibilities: most men feel this way about their income-producing work, as do women. But, as detailed in Chapter Four, women also have the same self-discipline driving them to fulfill their responsibilities for household food chores: they clearly regard the regimen of food-related chores to be the moral and practical equivalent of an occupational praxis.

The fact that domestic food work is a job without financial remuneration may render its structure of skills, obligations and constraints largely invisible to those who seldom engage in it. But to the people who have been trained since early childhood in the imperatives and techniques for fulfilling the job's requirements, and who were repeatedly told (if not directly in words, then indirectly but constantly through targeted example) that the provision of food and health-through-food was a job—indeed, a calling—particularly suited to the fundamental fact of being female, the intensity and impact of such a professionalized mandate cannot be overestimated. The contemporary reality of domestic food production is, as Berger and Luckmann wrote, "...knowledge that may be borne out in experience and that can subsequently become systematically organized as a body of knowledge. [T]he same body of knowledge is transmitted to the next generation. It is learned as objective truth in the course of socialization and thus internalized as subjective reality. This reality in turn has power to shape the individual" (1967:66-7).

The current discussion is, necessarily, an interrogation of gendered practice and identity. As previously stated, women and food, especially the production of food at home, have been cross-identified for so long that the congruence is considered to be "natural." But, other than breastfeeding, which is usually a consequence of childbirth, there is no reason other than social convention that men cannot or do not produce food in domestic contexts as well and as often as women do. Certainly, fathers who are single parents, un-partnered men who live alone, house-husbands, and men in same-sex partnerships tend to be the primary food-producers for their households; and some men in more conventional relationships and households fill that role as well. But, as was found in this and countless other studies, the percentage of male "ownership" of domestic food chores is small relative to that of women's, which may stem from habits and expectations that were set in childhood.

The fact that there is a strong emotional component to this work “fits” traditional gender-related behavioral norms for women. Not only is it understood to be women’s work, but it is work especially suited to female gender socialization, particularly as it occurs inter-generationally within families. Cabré (2008) notes that transmission of the techniques and responsibilities for domestic food and health work have long been an intrinsic part of the relationship between mothers and daughters. She writes of a “...mother/daughter bond that appears imbued in women's practices” (p.49), which consist of “the wide range of expert activities both to maintain health and to cure or relieve sickness that were conducted in households” (p.25), including food production and making decisions about nutrition. While Cabré’s point of interest was medieval Europe, her argument that imperatives for household food and health care formed a key part of how girls were trained to be women is echoed and ratified in the *HMP* data.

Among the households included in this study, it was evident that training in food- and health-related skills is still provided to and required of girls much more often than of boys. “Hyunmi has given this task to her eldest daughter to make sure she gets used to doing house chores” (O5). “Alana usually helps clean up after dinner. She does this to help out and learn responsibility” (K10). “Sue [daughter] is expected to do the dishes and make the rice. She helps prepare the meal and sets the table” (M17). Respondents reported that, even when expected to participate in mealtime activities, boys often showed reluctance: “Kylie [daughter] will set the table and clean and Rick [son] will have similar responsibility, but Kylie is just more diligent at actually carrying her chores out. Rick will most of the time sit on his lazy butt” (J7). “Andy [oldest son] will sometimes help. He will help clear the table if Ellen [mother] complains enough” (J10). No similar comments were made about daughters’ lack of participation in food chores. While these remarks articulate a contemporary trend toward a more gender-equal expectation that both girls and boys should participate in food chores, the fact that training is still focused on girls and comes almost exclusively from mothers territorializes the activities as feminine, rather than masculine or gender-neutral.

Certainly, in the *HMP* data, there seemed to be little father-to-son transmission of food skills that was similar to the well-established line from mothers to daughters. For example, Bruce (G8) was his household’s main cook and food shopper, and he took the role because he loved to work with food and found great pleasure in sharing his passion with

others. His wife assisted frequently, as did their daughter. But their two sons were indifferent to food matters (except eating) and did not participate in these activities. Despite the non-traditional configuration of responsibility in this household, there was no evidence that it carried over into the next generation, and this seemed to be typical. Overall, there were 23 *HMP* households in which male PHs held major or equal responsibility for food production (cooking or putting meals together). Of these households, 13 had younger members in residence, including 12 households with boys. Only one household reported that a son “helped frequently” (L3) with meal preparation, while, in others, sons helped less often or not at all. None described fathers who were currently teaching their children how to cook or passing along other food-related skills, although a 60-year-old woman reported that her husband, who cooked frequently and enjoyed it, had years ago passed along some of his culinary skills and enthusiasm to their son (G1). In contrast, several female PHs mentioned teaching their daughters (but not sons) and the emotional connection created thereby: “I occasionally cook with my older daughter to show new recipes and how to make them” (C7nyc72). “Well, when my older daughters come over they always help me prepare the meal. I feel really happy to have my daughters come over and help me with mealtime chores. It's a bonding time” (H4nyc85). “When her daughters are helping, Barb enjoys teaching them how to cook” (M10).

This evidence from *HMP* households affirms the findings from other studies (DeVault 1991; Hollows 2003; and others) that women and men approach the work of feeding others quite differently. For women, food work is often associated with “womanliness,” as DeVault puts it, and these are life skills that are learned continuously throughout childhood: “...girls are often recruited into womanly activities based on the principles of responsibility and attention...” (p.119). For men, on the other hand, cooking often fills a personal need—if there is no one else to produce meals in a timely manner—or a personal preference, as a hobby, rather than a deep-seated sense of duty (Hollows 2003; Coltrane 1989). Among *HMP* families, only one food-related chore—taking out the garbage—was frequently cited as a task for the “man of the house,” for which responsibility often passed from father to son. Importantly, though, garbage duty was not cited as a caring activity, but rather as one that conformed to a traditionally masculine paradigm, as an

outdoor activity that required strength, the necessity to venture outside at night, and occasional confrontations with marauding animals.

As was apparent in respondents' remarks, a sense of identity—of the self and one's relationships within the household, networks of kin and friends, and ethnic or cultural heritage ties—is closely associated with food. For some, largely women, working with food was a powerful factor in their definition of self: "I am a cook" or "I love to cook" (Z6, X20nyc98, H14nj4, and others). Even for the large number who disliked doing food-related work but did it anyway, fulfilling these responsibilities was felt to be an important part of their identity within the family: it was a major contribution to the group's welfare, as well as a tangible expression of care for individuals and cohesion for the household. These women were keenly aware of the importance of their role to themselves and to the household.

Thus the identification of food-related activities with womanliness must certainly be a component in the assignment or assumption of domestic food-related labor in most households. As part of their *habitus* (using Bourdieu's definition of the term as an amalgam of learned habits, skills and preferences that lie at the core of an individual's sense of self [Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992]), women tend to have a feeling that food chores are uniquely and inevitably their responsibility—like it or not—while men, with a somewhat different *habitus*, often experience a distancing or othering about domestic food work. Visible in Theodore Greenstein's research is an interesting finding that women's preferences about the division of household labor more strongly influence how equally the work is distributed on a daily basis than what their husbands want (1996). If a woman has a traditional gender ideology, in which she does gender "...by doing most of the housework and by not allowing [her] husband to contribute..." (Greenstein 1996:588), then any change toward greater equality is unlikely to occur, whether her partner is traditional or non-traditional in outlook. In addition, Hollows suggests that the contemporary shift toward a more gender-neutral understanding of domestic tasks may, ironically, privilege men, as it "...presume[s] a position of distance from domestic labour that is more readily available to men than women" (2003:231) and tends to reflect the more-common male experience of lesser involvement in food chores. The practical reality of this distance can be seen in the ubiquitous finding in recent research that, in terms of the entirety of domestic chores, men are doing somewhat more than in past decades and women are doing somewhat less, while fewer chores are

attempted, overall (Robinson and Hunter 2008; Coltrane 2000; Knudson-Martin and Mahoney 1998; Milkie 1999). Rather than sustaining established standards or equalizing workloads, the choice is made to abandon some tasks altogether—a form of domestic triage that may put even more emphasis on those activities that are continued. As the *HMP* data make clear, food chores are among those that largely have not been reassigned or are incompletely shared, which hints strongly at their importance to the women who do them.

CREEPING CHANGE: *PLUS ÇA CHANGE...*

Given the sustained gender imbalance in responsibility for domestic food chores, it is interesting to find empirical evidence that some measurable change in the completion of these tasks has occurred. Rather than a complete transfer of responsibility from one person to another, the greatest amount of change in household food matters appears to involve increased collaboration—a movement away from one person always doing a task toward distributing the effort among two or more members of a household, in which they either work together or in some kind of sequence.

In their mid-1980s study of 489 married couples, Dana Hiller and William Philliber (1986) inquired which partner prepared meals, went grocery shopping, and washed dishes, and whether the wife or husband held sole responsibility for each task, or if they shared the chore. Although Hiller and Philliber reported wives' and husbands' "perceptions" separately in order to show the similarities or disparities, it was possible to average their percentages to achieve a profile of effort by household for these three chores, in order to compare them to identical data from dual-gender participant households from *The Household Meals Project*. This exercise offers a rare opportunity to compare apples to apples over a span of two decades and to track some of the changes that have occurred in the performance of three tasks that have been typed as "female" by many researchers (Coltrane 2000; Kroska 2003; Starrels 1994; Orbuch & Eyster 1997; and others). It must be noted, however, that Hiller and Philliber only investigated the frequency with which partners did do these chores. They did not present information about the frequency of non-completion: how often the chores were never done by these individuals. As may be seen in the *HMP*'s data in Chapter Three, a complete lack of involvement in one chore or another is a significant factor and clearly shows the presence of gender imbalance.

**Table 20: Meal Preparation in Dual-Gender Households:
Change from 1980s to 2000s**

	Female partner only	F & M partners share	Male partner only
Hiller & Philliber: 1980s †	83%	12%	5%
<i>Household Meals Project: 2002-4 *</i>	25%	57%	2%
% Change	-70%	+375%	-60%

† Data derived from Hiller and Philliber 1986:196.

* Total does not equal 100% because in 37% of dual-gender *HMP* households, the male PH never prepared meals, and in another 2% of dual-gender *HMP* households, the female PH never prepared meals. This category of information was not presented in the 1980s study.

**Table 21: Food Shopping in Dual-Gender Households:
Change from 1980s to 2000s**

	Female partner only	F & M partners share	Male partner only
Hiller & Philliber: 1980s †	69%	21%	10%
<i>Household Meals Project: 2002-4*</i>	25%	62%	2%
% Change	-64%	+195%	-80%

† Data derived from Hiller and Philliber 1986:196.

* Total does not equal 100% because in 33% of dual-gender *HMP* households, the male PH never shopped for food, and in another 2% of dual-gender *HMP* households, the female PH never shopped for food. This category of information was not presented in the 1980s study.

**Table 22: Wash Dishes/Clean-up in Dual-Gender Households:
Change from 1980s to 2000s**

	Female partner only	F & M partners share	Male partner only
Hiller & Philliber: 1980s †	62%	32%	6%
<i>Household Meals Project: 2002-4*</i>	14%	64%	2%
% Change	-77%	+100%	-67%

† Data derived from Hiller and Philliber 1986:196.

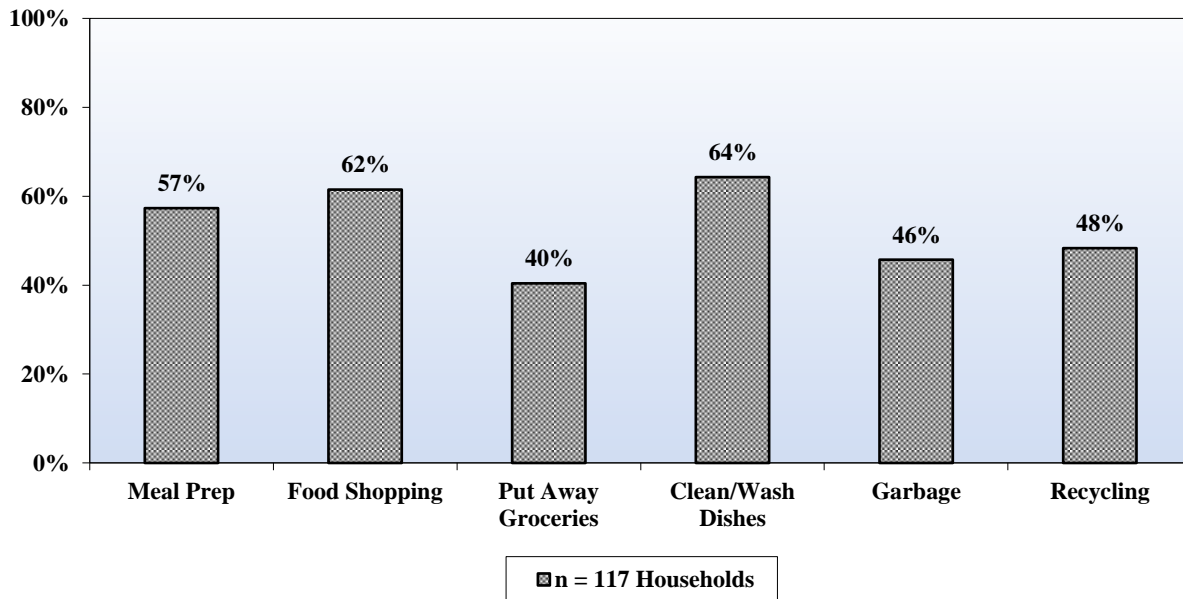
* Total does not equal 100% because in 32% of dual-gender *HMP* households, the male PH never washed dishes, and in another 6% of *HMP* households, the female PH never washed dishes. This category of information was not presented in the 1980s study.

All chores showed a marked reduction in the proportion of female partners who were the only people in their households to work on these tasks. In the 1980s, all chore sets were women's solo responsibility in well over half of the households surveyed (ranging from 83% with meal preparation, 69% doing food shopping, to 62% washing dishes and cleaning up). Among the couples profiled 20 years later, women shouldered these responsibilities alone in a maximum of one-quarter of participant households (specifically, the 2002-4 percentages were: 25% in both meal preparation and food shopping, and 14% for clean-up/washing dishes). Men's solo responsibility for the same tasks also dropped over the same period, reducing their already-small percentages to an across-the-board rate of 2%. These findings echo similar results that show a trend in which both women and men do fewer household chores, overall (Coltrane 2000; South and Spitze 1994).

The most notable shift among these three chores is a large increase in the percentage of partners who share the work. Over all cases, a majority of couples in 2002-4 (57% meal preparation; 62% food shopping; and 64% washing dishes and cleaning) reported task-sharing, as opposed to a minority of partners in the 1980s (12% meal preparation; 21% food shopping; and 32% washing dishes and cleaning).

Similar data from an earlier period were not found for the other chores measured in *The Household Meals Project*, namely, putting away groceries and garbage; while recycling only became common in residential communities in the 1990s, so earlier data were not possible. However, while change over time cannot be tracked in the same way for these chores, the *HMP* data indicate that the tasks are shared between partners to a significant degree, although less than those discussed previously. The following table sets forth the aggregated data for each chore from *HMP* households with dual-gender PHs. In order to identify the instances in which both female and male PHs worked on a particular task, any household in which either PH appeared in the "always" or "never" categories was eliminated, as was effort by other household members.

Table 23: Shared Chores: Households with Dual-Gender Principal Householders (PHs)



It is interesting to note that the three chore sets above with the lowest percentages of shared effort—putting away groceries, garbage handling, and recycling—are the same ones for which the more-detailed presentation of labor distribution in Chapter Three and respondents’ remarks cited in Chapter Four evidenced a significant degree of involvement by other household members. This association suggests that such chores may be considered to be more-peripheral food tasks and thus are more easily shared among a variety of workers, including children and teens. On the other hand, preparing meals, food shopping, and the multi-faceted task of clearing after meals, washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen all appear to be tasks that are dominated by adults—and PHs, in particular. As the core food chores, these require more effort on a daily basis, as well as identifiable skills and experience.

The historical-comparative data on the degree to which food tasks are shared indicate that less solo responsibility is held by both women and men currently than was the case in the 1980s. The increase in cooperative effort by female and male PHs in preparing meals, acquiring food, and kitchen maintenance appears to be significant. However, it must be noted that the *HMP* data included a wide range of performance and participation in their definition of “sharing”: from partners who worked together or equally on a chore to couples in which one person was responsible for a task almost all of the time while the other

participated only intermittently. As was made clear in Chapter Three, the distribution of responsibility for these chores is still intensely gendered, with women dominating the higher frequency categories and men clustered in the lower ones. Further, remarks from many *HMP* respondents—both male and female—defined men’s involvement as helping their partners, rather than holding major responsibility for or ownership of a chore. “Ikem helps if he wants to, but for me it’s a responsibility. As a woman, I’m supposed to do it” (K3nyc68). “Barb cooks, and Mike helps out...” (M10). “Alex helps out at least three times a week” (M17). “My dad helps a lot with preparation once or twice a week” (M5). “Mom does most of the work. Dad will help sometimes” (X5). This finding was echoed in other research:

The few studies that measure initiation or management of family work find that women almost invariably assume a manager role, with men occasionally serving as their helpers... (Coltrane 2000:1219).

While greater involvement by men in domestic food tasks undoubtedly eases the burden on women, it is evident that the configuration of these matters has not changed in any fundamental way. It seems that planning, decision-making, and, ultimately, responsibility for daily household food chores still rests largely with women despite measureable progress toward shared effort. Peter Filene suggests that—for both partners—entrenched definitions of self and one’s role within the family network, with their associated specializations, far outweigh any impetus toward real change:

The two partners were trying to write a new, egalitarian script for their relationship but continuing to cast each other and themselves in essentially their old roles. More husbands took up household responsibilities than their fathers or grandfathers had, while more wives held jobs than their mothers and grandmothers. Nevertheless...each reach[ed] cooperatively toward the other while standing in their separate spheres. Whatever “togetherness” they achieved was subtracted from what each considered his or her “real” purposes (Filene 1998:189-90).

As Bourdieu sets forth, one’s *habitus* can and does change through conscious intent and as one is exposed to a variety of life circumstances and choices (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). But the gender-specifications that all of us incorporate into our patterns of being exert a strong influence and predispose us to certain actions, leading them to seem “natural.” Thus it may be that, even in households where female and male partners are both employed in full-time jobs and an egalitarian division of food-related responsibilities should be logical, it is

less than likely—on both partners’ parts—for logic to be the determining factor in figuring out who does what. Achieving an even split in household food chores may take a great deal of intent and effort, because it involves swimming upstream against the psychological and emotional currents of gender socialization, *habitus*, and social norms.

Thus, the intransigence and resilience of this gender-based division of labor appears to be due to its conformation as an emotional/identity construction within a rational setting and structure of expertise. By and large, this tends to be a system too powerful for women to break free of, and one that is too strongly unmasculine and, at the same time, too exclusive for men to break into. Both women and men are more deeply embedded in the traditionally gendered framework of food-related chores than they realize.

Although women’s unpaid domestic work has provided men with resources of care and comfort that sustain their position of professional and economic advantage, the institutionalized structure of gendered activity should not be seen as a simplistic duality of one-sided power and prestige and an unempowered form of servitude. As previously stated, for millennia and in countless cultures, women have been associated to the point of conflation with domestic food production. It has been one of their main functions in their home environments, and, as it fulfills a basic, daily necessity, the job is vital to everyone’s well-being. Through this association of such long standing and crucial importance, women not only have been identified with an obligation to carry out food tasks and provide adequate, healthful sustenance, but they have also derived a measure of personal and intra-family power and respect from wielding food-related decision-making and skills. The stature, self-respect, and satisfaction gained from these activities and circumstances constitute a kind of domestic cultural capital (to borrow and slightly amend Bourdieu’s concept [1984]).

Although intangible, the value of this cultural capital doubtless is significant to a woman who holds and keeps it through a combination of intrinsic right and possession of specific expertise, and it is likely that such an asset would be neither diluted nor yielded with alacrity. Homans identifies such “interpersonal rewards and resources” (1974 (1961):613) as a key aspect of family power, and one that has been under-appreciated and under-investigated in research into household dynamics. As an ongoing activity based on the fulfillment of daily necessity and a mandate for ensuring future benefit, the choice of foodstuffs and production of meals, in particular, can be seen as “a system of implicit power comprised of skills and

cooperation,” through which “individuals...maximize their benefits in social encounters, and...other individuals attribute this ability to them” (Grammer 1998:77). As described by Michael Dietler, these doings are “...subtleties in the daily manipulation of dietary and culinary variations, the kind of activity that Appadurai (1981) has identified as household ‘gastro-politics’...” (Dietler 1998:88). Unlike the working-world environment, filled with almost-certain gender inequalities, in which women labor for stunted wages and unreliable recognition, they possess a virtually undisputed upper hand in the vital arena of domestic food matters. While not held to be valuable in economic terms and necessitating a great deal of work, this advantage is, nonetheless, a source of pride and prestige in close relationships, in extended family and community contexts, and—perhaps most importantly of all—to a woman’s sense of who she is, where she comes from, and where she belongs.

As evidenced in *HMP* respondents’ remarks, not only personal identity but also group affiliations are sustained and reproduced through specific dishes that were made in individual households. Most often such foods act to reiterate one or more threads of a family’s ethnic heritage, and they are often served for holidays and at extended-family gatherings. “Arroz con gandules (yellow rice with green pigeon peas), everyone expects it. It’s a cultural holiday food. Pernil (pork shoulder), too” (K9nyc77). “Lori cooks a lot of rice because of her [adopted] sons’ ethnic heritages. She also cooks a lot of Italian food because of her heritage. She also tries to make ethnically specific stuff for the holiday meals” (N5). These dishes and the techniques to make them were often learned from mothers and grandmothers, and they helped to keep alive the memory of distant generations and homeplaces and served to orient the young to the flavors and practices of their particular ancestry and culture. “On holidays it is important to have a rib roast... It has been a tradition that has been passed on for generations” (C3nyc71). “I would say that traditional methods of cooking are important on holidays and when making certain recipes. It is common that we make it the way grandma did” (X14). “Italian food must be at all holidays. It’s tradition” (X3). Among *HMP* households, women overwhelmingly served as curators and practitioners in the kitchen of memory. Even where daily meal production was more equally distributed than usual, heritage cooking for holidays was almost always done by women. “My mom is usually assisted by my grandma and aunt for very large food preparations... This occurs mainly for holidays” (M4). “Sometimes the children, the girls, help cutting vegetables, look over

boiling pots, help with seasoning. Especially when holidays are near and big amounts of food get made” (M10). Barbara Shortridge argues that food is the most important element in sustaining cultural identity:

Ethnic dishes, even those eaten infrequently or on special occasions, have been shown to be a more popular means for maintaining (and sometimes reestablishing) identity than have activities involving language and other traditions (2003:509).

A surge of popular interest in ethnic and national cooking occurred during the latter half of the 20th century (Lindgren and Hingley 2009) driven, in part, by the growth of cheap air travel and freight: people visited faraway places, and exotic foodstuffs were transported to global markets. At the same time, television and other forms of mass media increasingly promulgated a dominant cultural perspective and blurred differences. Tulasi Srinivas (2007) observes that ethnic foods and heritage recipes have progressively served as ways in which individuals and families can sustain a sense of uniqueness and connectedness—to help articulate a distinct identity—especially when the special foods are prepared and consumed at home.

The multiculturalism of globalization emphasizes this nostalgic reconstruction of self through consumption. As identity becomes problematic due to the forces of globalization, [it] changes from being a “taken for granted” self (Berger 1967) to a constructed and changeable self, and is defined through choice, including one’s choices of food consumption and their attendant discourses. ... [The] realization of one’s given place in a community and home [occurs] through the reiteration of one’s caste/ethnic roots through a nostalgic eating of “home cooked foods” (Srinivas 2007:100-2).

In immigrant households, such foods tend to be used as a personal touchstone: a tangible tie to the place of origin, a taste of a recent past, and a cultural hook for children born in the new land (Ray 2004). This approach clearly was at work in this *HMP* household: “My girls knows that when the people comes to visit I will cook my own food [Pakistani dishes], and I think definitely they will learn my food. My husband says, ‘Give them our food that they get used to that one. Otherwise they won’t’” (C2). It is likely that an increased emphasis on specialized food in the definitions of family and self raised the levels of responsibility and respect for an expertise that was largely held by women. It may be argued that the conscious use of heritage and ethnic foods in identity-building has added

another layer of specialized knowledge and practice to domestic food praxis, and it ties the functions and obligations of food responsibilities together even more strongly.

This examination of the themes and implications of *HMP* respondents' testimony reveals a complicated fabric of ideas, all relevant to the question at issue. Women's continued dominance in domestic food matters appears to be sustained for a variety of reasons, including its entrenched place in gender ideology—that attention to household consumption is a feminized activity, which is considered to be natural and largely non-negotiable. Also important is the idea that a significant degree of personal power and positive status within the household accrues to the practitioner of this activity, and such power is held both by right and the possession of a substantial *praxis* of professionalized skills that continue to be taught, primarily to girls, throughout childhood, as a fundamental part of gender and personal identity. This early training seems to act as a strong measure of inherent inclusion and necessity for women and an equally strong exclusionary factor for men.

There is convincing evidence that several aspects of women's association with domestic food work have strengthened during the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st century. First, there has been an increasing medicalization of food, in which sustained health, avoidance of disease, and optimizing one's lifespan are all held to be vitally affected by diet—all of which tie into and magnify women's traditional responsibility for healthcare for their families. Second was the development of home economics and a codified, professionalized system of dietary, nutritional, and preparatory advice in concert with the standardization and spread of the suburbanized kitchen. The latter provided a rational and ubiquitous setting for the job of daily food work, and all of it served as a rational/emotional discipline that was particularly aimed at women. Third was a marked growth of interest in culturally specific food as a way for individuals and families to retain and affirm a sense of identity through ethnic affiliation in the face of increased cultural homogenization and globalization.

Finally, the *HMP* data documented an increase in “helping” as a common change in household food practices: a way in which partners and other members of a household participate more often in food chores than previously, while still vesting women with the primary responsibility for managing and enacting them.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Analysis of data from *The Household Meals Project* has revealed that the point of interest—to investigate why gender parity in responsibility for food-related household chores is proceeding much more slowly than it is for other domestic tasks—opens onto a complex network of underlying factors and conditions that work together to facilitate the status quo and inhibit significant change. Fundamental to this topic is the fact that domestic food work, in particular, has a long history of association with women. Although production of comestibles for oneself and others should be a gender-neutral task in a contemporary setting, the longtime feminization of food chores and the profound integration of this function into female identity produce an almost-unbreakable bond that results in the virtually automatic assumption and assignment of these responsibilities by and to women. Testimony from *HMP* participants distinctly shows that many women derive an identifiable, strong source of power from this association, both personally and in terms of intra-household and social network status. It is important to understand that this power is not a reaction or resistance to other, better-recognized forms of power that are most commonly held by men; indeed, food-related power stands on its own. It is equally important to recognize that while food-related power is acknowledged and respected both by those who hold it and the other people in their households, it is most often wielded in the service of others. Indeed, such an external focus is used to rationalize the way in which female domestic effort has been and continues to be configured and appropriated for others' benefit. Although this rationale is a logical tautology, it is nonetheless widely employed and was cited by both women and their family members as justification for unequal effort.

On a personal note, despite the identification of home-based food work as a source of power and a key identity element for women, I must state quite strongly that nothing in this current publication—neither empirical evidence nor theoretical analysis—should be construed as a justification for sustaining high levels of unpaid domestic effort by women nor to limit access to the full range of non-domestic professional opportunities, advancement, and remuneration.

As previously delineated, the association of women and food has existed for millennia, and female responsibility for domestic food chores has endured through a

significant shift in recent decades by millions of adult women from intensive housewifery into long-term, paid employment. My research has identified some ways in which this connection may have intensified throughout the twentieth century, as various social trends have had an impact on or became intertwined with food and eating. First, in chronological order, was the parallel development of domestic science and the standardized, rational kitchen. In the former, home cooking was codified and shaped into an expertise or, as Foucault would term it, a “disciplinary technology” that instructed and regulated its practitioners. The latter, as shown in the *HMP* photographs, was the standardized, rational kitchen—filled with power tools for women that facilitated a lucrative transition from armaments to appliances for many American manufacturers after World War II and a key element of the post-war suburban building boom. The combination of directed domestic cookery and the standard, suburbanized kitchen was aimed directly at women, providing both place and procedures for the unpaid effort of rebuilding a robust civilian life after the war and sustaining it over the long term. From the mid-20th century on, this type of kitchen with its configuration and contents has become ubiquitous across the American homescape, in urban, suburban, and rural dwellings.

Second was the gradual intensification of health issues as a focus of food consumption and preparation. Perhaps in reaction to increasing public concern about the growth of corporate agriculture and industrialized food production, the daily diet became a touch-point of medical concern, as well as a source of sustenance and pleasure. Strategic food intake and preparation techniques came to be seen as ways that individuals could maintain good health, avoid or mitigate major diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and circulatory problems, and achieve an optimal lifespan. Medicalized food joined the other family health concerns and care for which women were traditionally responsible, magnifying both the expertise and the burden of ensuring everyone’s continued vitality.

Finally, there was a surge of interest in culturally specific cuisines and dishes as access to far-flung locales and imports of exotic foodstuffs became increasingly commonplace. This heightened global traffic in commodities and cultural information also fed a countervailing growth in the use of generationally transmitted recipes and food as markers for individual and family identity. Served particularly on holidays and special

occasions, such dishes are specialty items that tend to be fostered and prepared mostly by women, even when the heritage commemorated is not their own.

Together, these developments have strengthened the tie between women and domestic food work over the last century. Especially with regard to food tasks, this more-intense relationship tends to inhibit a shift toward gender equality, while other household chores—without an equivalent or intensifying bond—have shown a trend toward greater gender neutrality.

This lack of movement was seen distinctly in the quantitative results from the *HMP* data. Overall, the profile of responsibility for most food-related effort in the 150 *HMP* households shows that women are still overwhelmingly involved in these tasks. Involvement in food chores by female respondents in all households ranged from 98% (meal preparation and grocery shopping) to 94% (clearing and washing up after meals) to 90% (putting away groceries). Even in the task categories in which male respondents participated more strongly—garbage handling and recycling—a majority of women also were involved: 60% dealt with garbage, and 69% handled recycling. Obviously, only a minority of women in *HMP* households were not involved in food chores on a regular basis.

Among male respondents, a high rate of participation was also found, but their level of non-involvement was notable as well. Among all *HMP* households, male participation ranged through the following levels: 68% of male PHs took part in food shopping and clearing and washing up after meals, 65% worked on meal preparation, and 45% were involved in putting away groceries. Of the tasks that many identified as traditionally more male-oriented, 80% of male PHs dealt with garbage and 63% handled recycling. On the flip-side of the preceding information one may see the levels of non-involvement by male respondents, ranging from 55% (putting away groceries) to 37-35% (recycling and meal preparation) and 32% (food shopping and clearing/washing dishes). Even garbage duty had a 20% non-participation rate among male respondents. While this percentage of non-involvement is the lowest among men across all chore categories and is linked to the highest rate of male participation in any chore, it is hardly equal to women's overall low of 2% non-involvement and corresponding high of 98% participation in both meal preparation and grocery shopping.

By creating a subset of data from the 117 participant households with both female and male principal householders, it became apparent that a dual-gender environment tended to intensify the traditional assignment of food chores to women, except for handling garbage, which skewed slightly more strongly toward male responsibility than it did in the general respondent population. It was notable, however, that in all instances the trend toward a more traditional configuration was fairly weak, ranging from one to six percentage points over all chores. Such a weak boost in gender specialization among dual-gender households actually underscores its strength among all *HMP* households, where higher levels of egalitarian responsibility might have been expected but were not found.

By examining activity levels among both women and men, it became obvious that while participation in food-related chores was substantially greater among female respondents than it was for men, the latter were involved in these activities in significant numbers. Moreover, this level of participation is a notable change from practices recorded by previous researchers. Exactly how much of a change has occurred was made clear through the comparison of some of the *HMP* data with similar information from Hiller and Philliber's mid-1980s study of 489 married couples. By focusing only on the *HMP* households with both female and male principal householders, it was possible directly to compare participation rates for women and men across three food chores: preparing meals, food shopping, and clearing/washing dishes—all in terms of solo effort for each gender, plus sharing of these tasks. It was evident that sole responsibility for the chores has diminished for both women and men, while sharing the work has grown substantially.

Although information from the earlier study was not available for the three other chore sets considered in my research (putting away groceries, garbage and recycling), the *HMP* data showed that they, too, are shared to a significant extent. However, the range of frequency within these data also showed that—for all chores except garbage handling—women do the work much more often than men, who tend to dominate the lesser frequencies.

Remarks by several *HMP* respondents indicated that this change—for change it certainly is—consists largely of an increase in men's "helping" with food chores rather than taking full responsibility for them. This kind of shift accommodates the need for more hands to participate in the daily labor of feeding, provisioning, and cleanup in order to balance the move into paid work by a majority of adult women. It also neatly sustains the social fabric of

gender norms and ideologies that underlie a household's basic relationships and individual identities, in which food-related matters are a multi-faceted specialty that is strongly associated with being female. By maintaining the familiar territory of responsibility, a challenge to the boundaries of gender identities and roles can be avoided, thus minimizing internal conflict. At the same time, the daily necessity to produce food within the practical realities of time and individual availability may be handled in whatever way is most efficient for the people involved and the household as a whole. Another bonus, especially for women, is that this arrangement—which leaves women in charge of food with increased effort by men as helpers—preserves and may actually magnify the traditional power base that stems from the expertise and trust embedded in food work.

As was heard in respondents' explanations of the division of food-related chores in their households, much of the distribution of such responsibility rests on the strategies of legitimation and pseudomutuality through which the traditional, gender-based assignment appears to be natural and immutable. "It just happened that way" serves as both explanation and justification for the way things are. As a profoundly normative statement, it also acts to mask the very real power that derives from the decisive role in a household's daily food consumption and, more importantly, from the belief that current food decisions have a significant impact on each individual's maintenance of health, avoidance of feared diseases, and length of life.

Another factor from respondents' comments that illustrates the weight given to these responsibilities by the women who hold them can be seen in the contradictory feelings expressed by many. While a large proportion of women in the study disliked food preparation, shopping, cleaning up, and the other food chores considered here, they clearly felt an obligation to do them anyway, and to do them well. Not just a service performed for others that could be done minimally, this was an expertise to be practiced according to high standards and aimed at defined, long-term goals. Particularly key was the idea that both responsibility and its associated status were held by right and enabled through training that had begun in childhood. Interestingly, it appears that the same kind of training is still being passed along to the next generation, but almost exclusively to girls. Although boys helped with a variety of food-related tasks (along with their fathers), female respondents reported teaching primarily daughters to cook and how to make culturally significant dishes; working

with their household's "next woman" (Laila, J11) to transmit specialized knowledge and to ensure future competence. Most important was the feeling that the information passed down had as much to do with a vital part of being female as it did with the practicalities of food. Quite literally, mothers were empowering their daughters.

As noted previously, recognizing this complex and only partially overt construct of power does not negate the fact that its activities have been more commonly enacted to benefit others rather than the people who possess it. The existence of a strand of power does not prohibit its appropriation to the service of others. In fact, holding a position of advantage can sometimes be a trap, as the possessor may be held to a higher level of performance than the less-advantaged, which certainly is so with regard to women's food work. But it is also important to give due recognition to a social and psychological paradigm that informs, instructs, and invigorates so many and has such an enduring influence on everyday life.

As may be surmised, there are unplumbed depths in the large pool of *HMP* information that offer extensive opportunities for further exploration and analysis. For instance, there are data from the 78 participant households that were not included in this current work and would doubtless bolster the findings and enrich the arguments that are presented here. The *HMP*'s huge collection of photographs of kitchens and food storage spaces offered key evidence in the present inquiry, but their potential has been only minimally realized. As planned, this aspect of the research was intended to bolster the main focus which was on respondents' spoken and written testimony. There are solid indications, however, that further work may prove the trove of visual data to be the most significant part of this effort, especially as it constitutes a surprisingly unique collection of information about a key place in contemporary life.

Among the possibilities for further research suggested by the issues considered here would be an investigation of the changing nature of men's relationship with domestic food work. As more men participate more often in the daily necessities of food chores, and sons grow up in households where such activity is common, the parameters of ownership and responsibility will inevitably shift. Another factor, at least in the contemporary American experience, is the allure of the "food porn" (Lindquist 2011) presented on the *Food Network*. With its all-food, all-the-time approach, this cable television staple has won an increasing share of hungry young male viewers who then head to the kitchen to practice new techniques

(“Food Network: The New MTV?” 2007). The growth of practical experience and interest in home cooking among men may do a great deal to promote gender equality in this area, especially among the younger cohorts. But it will also dilute the strength of a traditionally female power base. The effects should be interesting to observe.

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Appendix 1

The Household Meals Project: Interview Guide

Code: _____

Note: The font size and spacing have been adjusted throughout so this document will fit within the margins specified for dissertations.

How many people are included in your household? _____

Please tell me the following things about each person:

	Indiv. 1	Indiv. 2	Indiv. 3	Indiv. 4	Indiv. 5	Indiv. 6
Gender (circle one)	M F	M F	M F	M F	M F	M F
Age						
Which person is answering these questions?						
What is each person's favorite food or kind of food?						
Least favorite?						
Which meal of the day is the favorite?						
What meal is most likely to be eaten at home?						

THE HOUSEHOLD MEALS PROJECT

Interview Guide - page _____

Code: _____

	Indiv. 1	Indiv. 2	Indiv. 3	Indiv. 4	Indiv. 5	Indiv. 6
Check any that are important in each person's diet:						
1. Low sugar	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. Low fat	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. Low sodium	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. Organic	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. Vegetarian	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. Kosher	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. Non-dairy	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. Non-gluten	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. Limited calorie	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. High carbohydrate	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. Any other (please specify)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

In many of the following questions, you'll hear the phrase, "During the time that your household has been relatively stable..." This may mean different things to different people. I'd like to find out: 1) what it means to you, and 2) how long a period of time does it cover?

- I'd like to know how the dietary elements checked on the questionnaire became important. For instance, was it through medical necessity, religious preference, or an individual decision based on taste, health concerns, personal appearance, conscience, or other factors?
And how long has each one been important?
- During the time that your household has been relatively stable, has there been a change in diet for any of the household members you've listed?
(If yes): Please tell me when it happened, why it happened, and how it has affected others in the household. (For instance, has it caused others also to change their eating (who?), caused disagreement (what?), caused more/less cooking or shopping, etc.)

The next questions have to do with how meals and other food-related work happen in your household, as well as individual preferences and experiences:

- What is the meal *most likely* to be eaten at home?
- Is it eaten all together, in small groups (i.e., kids first, adults later), or individually?

5. Does everyone eat the same foods for this meal?

(If no): What are the differences?

6. Who tends to assemble this meal?

7. Does anyone else share that responsibility regularly?

8. Who most often sets the table?

9. Who is most likely to clear after the meal?

10. Who tends to wash the dishes?

11. What is the meal *next most likely* to be eaten at home?

12. Is it eaten all together, in small groups (i.e., kids first, adults later), or individually?

13. Does everyone eat the same foods for this meal?

(If no): What are the differences?

14. Who tends to assemble this meal?

15. Does anyone else share that responsibility regularly?

16. Who most often sets the table?

17. Who is most likely to clear after the meal?

18. Who tends to wash the dishes?

19. What is the meal *least likely* to be eaten at home?

20. Do you personally like best to...

...eat with others or by yourself? Why?

...shop for food with others, by yourself, or not at all? Why?

...put food items away with others, by yourself, or not at all? Why?

...prepare food with others, by yourself, or not at all? Why?

...clean up after meals with others, by yourself, or not at all? Why?

21. Do you work together with other household members on food-related chores?

(If yes): Please tell me who and how often.

22. Is eating a meal together important to the people in your household? How often a day or week? Please tell me as much about each person's point of view as you can.

23. What kind of an experience is a household meal for the people in your house? Tell me as much as you can from each person's perspective.

24. Do you usually look forward to mealtimes with others in your household? How about food shopping? Food preparation? Cleaning up?

25. Have you scheduled or structured your other activities (work, school, meetings, lessons, etc.) to enable or allow time for household meals?

(If yes): Please tell me how.

(If no): Please tell me why not?

26. For each of the people in your household who work, do household meals affect his/her work day (planning, shopping, other)?

(If yes): a) How? b) Is this felt as a conflict with job duties or not? Please explain.

(If no): Why not?

27. For the each of various people in your household who work, does his/her work affect household meals in any way?

(If yes): a) How? b) Is this felt as a conflict with household responsibilities and/or activities in any way?

(If no): Why not?

28. About how often do guests share your household's meals at home (per week; per month)?

29. Are your mealtime guests most often relatives, friends, or work associates? Of which household members? Who tends to suggest inviting them? Does the same person do the inviting?

(If work associates): Tell me about mealtimes with work-related guests. Do they tend to be informal, spur-of-the-moment, planned ahead of time, potluck, dinner parties?

30. How does having guests impact mealtime chores? Does it change the various responsibilities in any way?

(If yes): How do they change? How do you feel about this?

31. If there are children or teenagers in your household, do they have regular responsibility for mealtime chores?

(If yes): Please specify and tell me why they have these responsibilities.

(If no): Do they help occasionally? (If yes): How? And why?

(If no): Is there a reason the children don't participate in mealtime responsibilities?

32. If there are children or teenagers in your household, do they participate in any other food-related chores (such as shopping—with an adult or on their own, putting groceries away, helping plan meals, etc.)?

(If yes): Please specify and tell me at what age participation in each activity began.

(If no): Is there a reason the children don't participate in food-related chores?

33. If there are children or teenagers in your household, do they have regular responsibility for any other chores?

(If yes): Please specify and tell me why they have these responsibilities.

(If no): Do they help occasionally? (If yes): How? And why?

(If no): Is there a reason the children don't participate in household responsibilities?

34. Is there one person in your household who prepares meals more often than others?

(If yes): Who is that person?

Why does this person prepare meals most often?

(If no): Which people tend to prepare meals more frequently than others?

Why do these people prepare meals most frequently?

(Make note if nobody cooks.)

35. During the time that your household has been relatively stable, has the same person/people had responsibility for meal preparation?

36. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?

(If yes): How has it changed?

What was the cause?

When did it change?

37. Have there been any changes in responsibility for meal preparation that were related to life landmarks (for instance, health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job)?
38. How did the people in your household assign responsibility for meal preparation? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).
39. Is the assignment of responsibility for meal preparation a source of disagreement?
(If yes): Please tell me about it.
(If no): Why not? What keeps it from being so?
40. How is preparation of household meals regarded by the people in your household? Please tell me as much about each person's point of view as you can.
41. How is preparation of meals **for guests** regarded by the people in your household? Please tell me as much about each person's point of view as you can.
42. Do individuals in your household prepare their own meals on weekdays?
(If yes): Who?
43. Which weekday meals are the most likely to be prepared by individuals for themselves (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)?
44. Do individuals in your household prepare their own meals on weekends?
(If yes): Who?
(If this answer is different than the answer to #42): Why do you think individual responsibility for meal preparation is different on weekends?
45. Which weekend meals are the most likely to be prepared by individuals for themselves (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)?
46. What is important to **each person** in your household about the foods that are included in meals eaten at home (ease/speed of preparation, cost, nutritional balance, variety, taste, other)?
47. How are foods usually prepared or served for household meals (from scratch or fresh ingredients, from mixes, heat and eat, takeout or ready-to-eat, leftovers, other)?
- The next few questions refer to the meal that most people in your household usually eat at home. Please identify which meal it is.**
48. How many times a week is this meal eaten at home by a majority of the people in your household?
49. Who eats this meal at home most often?
50. How frequently does each person eat this meal elsewhere? Please tell me how often (per week, per month).
51. What are the usual reasons that each person eats this meal elsewhere (work-related, out of town, guest elsewhere, eat out, etc.)?
52. How long does this mealtime usually last?

53. What foods tend to be made for this meal from scratch or fresh ingredients (only general categories: main dish, side dishes, salads, bread, desserts, baked goods other than bread, other)?
How often in a typical week?
54. What foods tend to be made from mixes (again, general categories: main dish, side dishes, salads, bread, desserts, baked goods other than bread, other)?
How often in a typical week?
55. What foods tend to be heat-and-eat? This includes chilled or frozen items from supermarkets or other sources, but not ice cream or frozen desserts. (General categories.)
How often in a typical week?
56. What takeout or ready-to-eat foods are served? Includes supermarket, fast food, pizza, deli, cafeteria, salad bar, or restaurant items that are fully prepared and ready to eat. (General categories.)
How often in a typical week?
57. What leftovers are served? This includes foods that are intended to be served for more than one meal, or planned leftovers. (General categories.)
How often in a typical week?
58. If there are children in your household, do they eat different foods for this meal than the adults?
(If yes): How often: always, frequently, not often? How is their food different? And why? Who decides that it'll be different? What impact does this have on others?
(If no): Why not? Who decides that kids will eat the same food as adults? And why?

The next few questions have to do with how your household's meals are planned and how food-related decisions are made.

59. Which person or people tend(s) to get (buy or other) most of your household's food?
60. Does he/she/they tend to do it alone or with others?
(If others): Who?
61. Do other household members also get some food for your household?
62. During the time that your household has been relatively stable, has the same person/people had responsibility for getting food?
63. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?
(If yes): How has it changed?
What was the cause?
When did it change?
64. Have there been any changes in responsibility for getting food that were related to life landmarks (for instance, health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job)?
65. How did the people in your household assign responsibility for getting food? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).

66. Is the assignment of responsibility for getting food a source of disagreement?
(If yes): Please tell me about it.
(If no): Why not? What keeps it from being so?
67. When planning or choosing which foods to get, are others asked for their input (wishes, preferences, dislikes, etc.)? How substantially does their input affect the decisions made? Do you make a list?
68. At what time of the day and week does the major food shopping tend to be done?
 Why is it done at that particular time? Do you take a list?
69. Where is the food for your household gotten? For instance, at a supermarket, small grocery, warehouse/retail club, fruit and vegetable market, deli, specialty shop, farm stand, from friends or relatives, food cooperative, food pantry, other?
70. How many times a week or month do you tend to go to each food outlet? (Supermarket, small grocery, warehouse/retail club, fruit and vegetable market, deli, specialty shop, farm stand, friends or relatives, food cooperative, food pantry, other)
71. If getting food is done by more than one person, where does each tend to go? (Supermarket, small grocery, warehouse/retail club, fruit and vegetable market, deli, specialty shop, farm stand, friends or relatives, food cooperative, food pantry, other)
72. Which of the following factors is important in selecting an outlet for getting food: close to home; close to work; en route from home to work; prices; variety of goods; quality of goods; special foods available; speed of service; other?
73. About how much money is spent each week for food to be prepared or eaten at home? (This includes staple items, already-prepared food to be eaten at home, and items taken from home and eaten elsewhere.)
74. Is this amount planned (budgeted) or not? Is it discussed among household members (who?)? Is there any disagreement about it?
75. Where does food money come from? Does a particular person supply it? How is this decided?
76. Who has the most say in how this money is spent?
77. Does the same person who gets most of the food tend to put away the groceries?
(If yes): Why?
(If no): Who does it and why?
78. When are decisions usually made about what to serve for each meal that's eaten at home?
 Breakfast (just before eating or preparing; the previous day; a few days before; when food shopping; always have the same thing; other)?
 Lunch (just before eating or preparing; the previous day; a few days before; when food shopping; always have the same thing; other)?
 Dinner (just before eating or preparing; the previous day; a few days before; when food shopping; always have the same thing; other)?
 Snacks (just before eating or preparing; the previous day; a few days before; when food shopping; always have the same thing; other)?

79. Who usually decides what will be served for each meal? (Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)
80. During the time that your household has been relatively stable, has the same person/people had responsibility for deciding the contents of meals?
81. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?
(If yes): How has it changed?
 What was the cause?
 When did it change?
82. Have there been any changes in responsibility for these decisions that were related to life landmarks (for instance, health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job)?
83. How did the people in your household assign this responsibility? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).
84. Is it a source of disagreement?
(If yes): Please tell me about it.
(If no): Why not? What keeps it from being so?
85. When planning or deciding what foods to prepare, are others asked for their input (wishes, preferences, dislikes, etc.)? How substantially does their input affect the decisions made?
86. Whose food preferences or needs usually are the major consideration in deciding what is eaten in a household meal?
87. If one individual's preferences usually predominate, please tell me how household meals are different when that person is not eating? (For instance, we eat leftovers, fast food, skip the meal, eat out, eat meat, don't eat meat, etc.)
88. If the person who usually prepares the household meals is absent, how are the meals most often different? (See sample answers for question above.)
89. Which household member is most like to be absent from meals at home? Who and why? How does this impact meals and other members of the household? Does her/his absence impact the completion of other food chores in any way? How? Is this a source of conflict?
90. How often do you tend to eat out in a week? Month? Together or separately? Does this tend to be work-related or not? Who usually suggests eating out? Does that person also decide whether or not to do so?
91. About how much money is spent each week on eating out? Does this amount include food purchased during the work day (not groceries)? If so, how much is spent at work?
92. Is this amount planned (budgeted) or not? Is it discussed among household members (who?)? Is there any disagreement about it?
93. Where does eating-out money come from? Does a particular person supply it? How is this decided?
94. Who has the most say in how this money is spent?
95. Is food more important to certain members of your household than to others?

(If yes): Please tell me who and how?

(If no): Then is it equally important, or generally unimportant?

96. What is important about it (quality, quantity, familiarity, difference, conviviality of mealtimes) to each person?

Now, I'd like to explore some questions about group and personal identity:

97. Would you say that food is an important factor in either personal or household/family identity for the people in your household?

(If yes): Please tell me who and how?

(If no): Why do you think that might be?

98. Would you say that particular methods of preparing food are important sources of identity for individuals or the household/family as a whole?

(If yes): Please tell me who and how?

(If no): Why do you think that might be?

99. Would you say that particular kinds of food are important sources of identity for individuals or the household/family as a whole?

(If yes): Please tell me who, which, and how?

(If no): Why do you think that might be?

100. Is food used as a reward, either for oneself or for others, in your household?

(If yes): Please tell me how, by whom and for whom.

(If no): Is there a reason why not?

101. Is food used to make people feel happier, either oneself or others, in your household?

(If yes): Please tell me how, by whom and for whom.

(If no): Is there a reason why not?

102. Is food or the withholding of it used as a punishment for oneself or others in your household?

(If yes): Please tell me how, by whom and for whom.

(If no): Is there a reason why not?

103. Is there an important factor in the food-related tasks or consumption of food in your household that hasn't been mentioned? If so, what is it?

104. Have you thought of anything that I haven't asked about, or did any of your responses seem to go in a direction that wasn't followed up?

Please tell me more about each person in your household:

	Indiv. 1	Indiv. 2	Indiv. 3	Indiv. 4	Indiv. 5	Indiv. 6
Who are the primary householders (in whose names is your home owned or rented)?						
What is this person's relationship to the primary householder(s)?						
Current occupation						
Does this person hold a second job? If so, what?						
Total hours worked per week, per job						
What days and times does this person work?						
How far from home does this person work?						
Annual income (round to the nearest \$10,000)						

	Indiv. 1	Indiv. 2	Indiv. 3	Indiv. 4	Indiv. 5	Indiv. 6
Educational level already attained						
Does this person attend school? (Please specify: elem., jr. high, high schl., vocational, college, grad. schl., other prof'l training.)						
Religion						
Marital status						
Birthplace						
Growing-up region						
Citizenship or status in US						
What ethnicity(ies)?						

Thank you very much for your time and attention. Your responses will be very helpful to my work and are much appreciated.

Appendix 2

The Household Meals Project: Questionnaire

Note: The font size and spacing have been adjusted throughout so this document will fit within the margins specified for dissertations.

COVER PAGE

Student's Name _____

Student's Stony Brook ID # _____

Student's email address: _____

Directions:

Please select a household to profile in this questionnaire. You may choose any household that meets the following criteria:

1. There are at least two adults living in the household (18 years or older). This is a minimum—more household members are fine.
2. The two adults must have a bond of affection. This can include significant others, husband & wife, parent & adult child, or a pair of adult siblings.
3. The two adults in the household must have shared living quarters for two years or longer.

(Your profiled household must meet ALL of these criteria. If it does not, you will not receive credit for the project.)

- Supply all requested information.
- You will have to interview someone in the household to get most of the information.
- Please write down their responses verbatim (word-for-word, just as the words are spoken), as much as you can.
- You can write on extra paper, if needed.
- Be sure to label all responses and information on extra pages with the appropriate question numbers, so I can figure them out later.
- Put your name, SB-ID number, and email address ONLY on this cover page.
- Clip or staple your questionnaire and extra sheets (if any) to the cover page.

If you have questions, please email me at: cslindquist@msn.com

**THIS COMPLETED PROJECT IS DUE ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2004.
NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GIVEN.**

Where is this household located? (town & state) _____

How many people are included in this household? _____

How long have the people in this household lived together?

Adults _____

Children ___ since infancy _____ later

(If different for different individuals, please give details on extra paper or on back of this sheet.)

PLEASE TELL ME THE FOLLOWING ABOUT EACH PERSON IN THIS HOUSEHOLD:

	Indiv. 1	Indiv. 2	Indiv. 3	Indiv. 4	Indiv. 5	Indiv. 6
Who are the primary householders (in whose names is the home owned or rented)?						
What is this person's relationship to the primary householder(s)?						
Current occupation						
Does this person hold a second job? If so, what?						
Total hours worked per week, per job						
What days and times does this person work?						
How far from home does this person work?						
Annual income (round to the nearest \$10,000)						

	Indiv. 1	Indiv. 2	Indiv. 3	Indiv. 4	Indiv. 5	Indiv. 6
Educational level already attained						
Does this person attend school? (Please specify: elem., jr. high, high school, vocational, college, graduate schl., other prof'l training.)						
Religion						
Married, single, cohabiting, divorced, widowed?						
Birthplace						
Growing-up region						
Citizenship or status in US						
What ethnicity(ies)?						

1. I'd like to know how the dietary elements checked above became important. For instance, was it through medical necessity, religious preference, individual taste, health concerns, personal appearance, conscience, or other factors? (Please be specific for each person.)

And how long has each one been important?

2. During the time that this household has been together, has there been a change in diet for any of the household members you've listed?

(IF YES): Please tell me...

...when it happened:

...why it happened:

...and how it has affected others in the household (for instance, has it caused others also to change their eating (who?), caused disagreement (what kind?), caused more/less cooking or shopping, etc.):

THE NEXT QUESTIONS HAVE TO DO WITH HOW MEALS AND OTHER FOOD-RELATED WORK HAPPEN IN THIS HOUSEHOLD, AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES AND EXPERIENCES:

3. What is the meal MOST LIKELY to be eaten at home?

4. Is it eaten all together, in small groups (i.e., kids first, adults later), or individually?

5. Does everyone eat the same foods for this meal?

(IF NO): What are the differences?

6. Who tends to assemble this meal?

7. Does anyone else share that responsibility regularly?

8. Who most often sets the table?

9. Who is most likely to clear after the meal?

10. Who tends to wash the dishes?

11. What is the meal NEXT MOST LIKELY to be eaten at home?

12. Is it eaten all together, in small groups (i.e., kids first, adults later), or individually?

13. Does everyone eat the same foods for this meal?

(IF NO): What are the differences?

14. Who tends to assemble this meal?

15. Does anyone else share that responsibility regularly?

16. Who most often sets the table?

17. Who is most likely to clear after the meal?

18. Who tends to wash the dishes?

19. What is the meal LEAST LIKELY to be eaten at home?

20. Does the person you are interviewing personally like best to...

...eat with others or by yourself? Why?

...shop for food with others, by yourself, or not at all? Why?

...put food items away with others, by yourself, or not at all? Why?

...prepare food with others, by yourself, or not at all? Why?

...clean up after meals with others, by yourself, or not at all? Why?

21. Does this person work together with other household members on food-related chores?

(IF YES): Please tell me who and how often.

22. Is eating a meal together important to the people in this household?

(IF YES): How often a day or week?

Please tell me as much about each person's point of view as you can.

23. What kind of an experience is a household meal for the people in your house? Tell me as much as you can from each person's perspective.

24. Does the person you are talking to usually look forward to...

...mealtimes with others in this household? Why?

...food shopping? Why?

...preparing food? Why?

...cleaning up? Why?

25. Do the people in this household schedule or structure their other activities (work, school, meetings, lessons, etc.) to enable or allow time for household meals?

(IF YES): Please tell me how.

(IF NO): Please tell me why not?

26. For each of the people in this household who work, do household meals affect his/her work day (do she/he spend time planning, shopping, other)?

(IF YES): a) Please tell me how?

b) Is this felt as a conflict with job duties or not? Please explain.

(IF NO): Why not?

27. For the each of various people in this household who work, does his/her work affect household meals in any way?

(IF YES): a) How?

b) Is this felt as a conflict with household responsibilities and/or activities in any way?

(IF NO): Why not?

28. About how often do guests share this household's meals at home (per week; per month)?

29. Are the mealtime guests most often relatives, friends, or work associates?

Of which household members?

Who tends to suggest inviting them?

Does the same person actually do the inviting?

(IF WORK ASSOCIATES): Tell me about mealtimes with work-related guests.

Do they tend to be informal, spur-of-the-moment, planned ahead of time, potluck, dinner parties?

30. How does having guests impact mealtime chores? Does it change the various responsibilities in any way?

(IF YES): How do they change?

How do you feel about this?

31. If there are children or teenagers in this household, do they have regular responsibility for mealtime chores?

(IF YES): Please specify, and tell me why they have these responsibilities.

(IF NO): Do they help occasionally?

(IF YES): How? And why?

(IF NO): Is there a reason the children don't participate in mealtime responsibilities?

32. If there are children or teenagers in this household, do they participate in any other food-related chores (such as shopping—with an adult or on their own, putting groceries away, helping plan meals, etc.)?

(IF YES): Please specify and tell me at what age participation in each activity began.

(IF NO): Is there a reason the children don't participate in food-related chores?

33. If there are children or teenagers in this household, do they have regular responsibility for any other chores?

(IF YES): Please specify and tell me why they have these responsibilities.

(IF NO): Do they help occasionally?

(IF YES): How?

And why?

(IF NO): Is there a reason the children don't participate in household responsibilities?

34. Is there one person in this household who prepares meals more often than others?

(IF YES): Who is that person?

Why does this person prepare meals most often?

(IF NO): Which people tend to prepare meals more frequently than others?

Why do these people prepare meals most frequently?

() **CHECK HERE IF NOBODY COOKS**

35. During the time that this household has been together, has the same person/people had responsibility for meal preparation?

36. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?

(IF YES): How has it changed?

What was the cause?

When did it change?

37. Have there been any changes in responsibility for meal preparation that were related to life landmarks (for instance, health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a move, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job)?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it?

38. How did the people in this household assign responsibility for meal preparation? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.)?

39. Is the assignment of responsibility for meal preparation a source of disagreement?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

(IF NO): Why not? What keeps it from being so?

40. How is preparation of HOUSEHOLD MEALS regarded by the people in this household? Please tell me as much about each person's point of view as you can.

41. How is preparation of MEALS FOR GUESTS regarded by the people in this household? Please tell me as much about each person's point of view as you can.

42. Do individuals in this household prepare their own meals on WEEKDAYS?

(IF YES): Who?

43. Which weekday meals are the most likely to be prepared by individuals for themselves (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)?

44. Do individuals in this household prepare their own meals on WEEKENDS?

(IF YES): Who?

(If this answer is different than the answer to #42): Why do you think individual responsibility for meal preparation is different on WEEKENDS?

45. Which weekend meals are the most likely to be prepared by individuals for themselves (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)?

46. What is important to each person in this household about the foods that are included in meals eaten at home (ease/speed of preparation, cost, nutritional balance, variety, taste, other)?

47. How are foods usually prepared or served for household meals (from scratch or fresh ingredients, from mixes, heat and eat, takeout or ready-to-eat, leftovers, other)?

THE NEXT FEW QUESTIONS REFER TO THE MEAL THAT MOST PEOPLE IN THIS HOUSEHOLD USUALLY EAT AT HOME.

PLEASE IDENTIFY WHICH MEAL IT IS: _____

48. How many times a week is this meal eaten at home by a majority of the people in this household?

49. Who eats this meal at home most often?

50. How frequently does each person eat this meal elsewhere? Please tell me how often (per week, per month).

51. What are the usual reasons that each person eats this meal elsewhere (work-related, out of town, guest elsewhere, eat out, etc.)?

52. How long does this mealtime usually last?

53. What foods tend to be made for this meal from scratch or fresh ingredients (only general categories: main dish, side dishes, salads, bread, desserts, baked goods other than bread, other)?

How often in a typical week?

54. What foods tend to be made from mixes (again, general categories: main dish, side dishes, salads, bread, desserts, baked goods other than bread, other)?

How often in a typical week?

55. What foods tend to be heat-and-eat? This includes chilled or frozen items from supermarkets or other sources, but not ice cream or frozen desserts (again, general categories: main dish, side dishes, salads, bread, desserts, baked goods other than bread, other)?

How often in a typical week?

56. What takeout or ready-to-eat foods are served? Includes supermarket, fast food, pizza, deli, cafeteria, salad bar, or restaurant items that are fully prepared and ready to eat (again, general categories: main dish, etc.)?

How often in a typical week?

57. What leftovers are served? This includes foods that are intended to be served for more than one meal, or planned leftovers (again, general categories: main dish, etc.)

How often in a typical week?

58. If there are children in this household, do they eat different foods for this meal than the adults?

(IF YES): How often: always, frequently, not often?

How is their food different?

And why?

Who decides that it will be different?

What impact does this have on others?

(IF NO): Why not?

Who decides that kids will eat the same food as adults?

And why?

The next questions have to do with how this household's meals are planned and how food-related decisions are made.

59. Which person or people buy(s) most of this household's food?

60. Does he/she tend to do it alone or with others?

(IF WITH OTHERS): Who?

61. Do other household members also buy some food for this household?

(IF YES): Who?

62. During the time that this household has been together, has the same person/people had responsibility for buying food?

63. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?

(IF YES): How has it changed?

What was the cause?

When did it change?

64. Have there been any changes in responsibility for buying food that were related to life landmarks (for instance, health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a move, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job)?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

65. How was responsibility for buying food assigned? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).

66. Is the assignment of responsibility for buying food a source of disagreement?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

(IF NO): Why not? What keeps it from being so?

67. When planning or choosing which foods to get, are others asked for their input (wishes, preferences, dislikes, etc.)?

(IF YES): How substantially does their input affect the decisions made?

Is a list made?

68. At what time of the day and week does the major food shopping tend to be done?

Why is it done at that particular time?

How do you remember what to buy?

69. Where is the food for this household gotten? Please check all that are used:

- Supermarket Small grocery Warehouse/retail club
 Fruit and vegetable market Deli Specialty shop Farm stand
 From friends or relatives Food cooperative Food pantry

Other _____

70. Using the list above, tell me how many times a week or month you tend to go to each food outlet?

71. Again, using the list above: if getting food is done by more than one person, where does each tend to go?

72. Which of the following factors is important in selecting an outlet for getting food:

- close to home close to work on the way from home to work prices
 variety of goods quality of goods special foods available speed of service

Other _____

73. Using the list above, which factors are the most important in selecting a food store?

Most important _____; Second _____;

Third _____; Fourth _____

74. About how much money is spent each week for food to be prepared or eaten at home? (This includes staple items, already-prepared food to be eaten at home, and items taken from home and eaten elsewhere.)

75. Is this amount planned (budgeted) or not?

Is it discussed among household members?

Is there any disagreement about it?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

76. Where does food money come from?

Does a particular person supply it?

How is this decided?

77. Who has the most say in how food money is spent?

Is this a source of disagreement?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

78. Does the same person who buys most of the food tend to put away the groceries?

(IF YES): Why?

(IF NO): Who does it and why?

79. When are decisions usually made about what to serve for each meal that's eaten at home?

Breakfast (just before eating or preparing; the previous day; a few days before; when food shopping; always have the same thing; other)?

Lunch (just before eating or preparing; the previous day; a few days before; when food shopping; always have the same thing; other)?

Dinner (just before eating or preparing; the previous day; a few days before; when food shopping; always have the same thing; other)?

Snacks (just before eating or preparing; the previous day; a few days before; when food shopping; always have the same thing; other)?

80. Who usually decides what will be served for each meal? (Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)

81. During the time that this household has been together, has the same person/people had responsibility for deciding the contents of meals?

82. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?

(IF YES): How has it changed?

What was the cause?

When did it change?

83. Did responsibility for these decisions shift at life landmarks (for instance, did responsibilities vary because of health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a move, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job)?

(IF YES): Tell me about it.

84. How did the people in this household assign this responsibility? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).

85. Is it a source of disagreement?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

(IF NO): Why not? What keeps it from being so?

86. When planning or deciding what foods to prepare, are others asked for their input (wishes, preferences, dislikes, etc.)? How substantially does their input affect the decisions made?

87. Whose food preferences or needs usually are the major consideration in deciding what is eaten in a household meal?

88. If one individual's preferences usually predominate, please tell me how household meals are different when that person is not eating? (For instance, we eat leftovers, fast food, skip the meal, eat out, eat meat, don't eat meat, etc.)

89. If the person who usually prepares the household meals is absent, how are the meals most often different? (See sample answers for question above.)

90. Which household member is most like to be absent from meals at home?

Why?

How does this impact meals and other members of the household?

Does her/his absence impact the completion of other food chores in any way?

(IF YES): How?

Is this a source of conflict?

(IF YES): Tell me about it.

91. How often do you tend to eat out in a week?

Month?

Together or separately?

Does this tend to be work-related or not?

Who usually suggests eating out?

Does that person also decide whether or not to do so?

92. About how much money is spent each week on eating out?

Does this amount include food purchased during the work day (not groceries)?

If so, how much is spent at work?

93. Is this amount planned (budgeted) or not?

Is it discussed among household members?

(IF YES): Who?

Is there any disagreement about it?

(IF YES): Tell me about it.

94. Where does eating-out money come from?

Does a particular person supply it?

How is this decided?

95. Who has the most "say" in how this money is spent?

96. Is food more important to certain members of this household than to others?

(IF YES): Please tell me who and how?

(IF NO): Then is it equally important, or generally unimportant?

97. What is important about it (quality, quantity, familiarity, difference, social pleasure of mealtimes) to each person?

The next sets of questions have to do with how garbage and recycling chores are done in this household.

98. Which person most often carries garbage from the kitchen out to the garbage cans (or garbage chute)?

99. Does he/she always do it, or do other household members also carry garbage out from the kitchen?

100. During the time that this household has been together, has the same person/people had responsibility for carrying out garbage?

101. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?

(IF YES): How has it changed?

What was the cause?

When did it change?

102. Were life landmarks related to any changes in responsibility for carrying garbage out (for instance, health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a move, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job)?

(IF YES): Tell me about it.

103. How was responsibility assigned for carrying garbage out? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).

104. Is the assignment of responsibility for carrying garbage out a source of disagreement?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

(IF NO): Why not? What keeps it from being so?

105. Which person most often takes the garbage cans out to the street for the garbage trucks to collect?

106. Does he/she always do it, or do other household members also take garbage cans out to the street?

107. During the time that this household has been together, has the same person/people had responsibility for taking garbage cans to the street?

108. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?

(IF YES): How has it changed?

What was the cause?

When did it change?

109. Have life landmarks (for instance, health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a move, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job) caused any changes in responsibility for taking garbage cans to the street?

(IF YES): How?

110. How was responsibility for taking garbage cans to the street decided? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).

111. Is the assignment of responsibility for getting garbage cans to the street a source of disagreement?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

(IF NO): Why not? What keeps it from being so?

112. Which person has the most responsibility for collecting food-related recyclables (cans, bottles, plastic containers, aluminum trays, etc.)?

113. Does he/she always do it, or do other household members collect recyclables?

(IF YES): Who?

114. During the time that this household has been together, has the same person/people had responsibility for collecting food-related recyclables?

115. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?

(IF YES): How has it changed?

What was the cause?

When did it change?

116. Did life landmarks cause any changes in responsibility for collecting recyclables (for instance, health problems, changes in marital/partner relationship, a move, a change in someone's daily routine: back to work, school, or a different job)?

(IF YES): Tell me about it.

117. How was responsibility for collecting food-related recyclables decided? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).

118. Has the assignment of responsibility for collecting recyclables been a source of disagreement?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

(IF NO): Why not? What keeps it from being so?

119. How are the collected recyclables gotten rid of?

120. Which person most often disposes of the collected recyclables?

121. Does anyone else share this responsibility?

(IF YES): Who?

How often?

(IF NO): Why not?

122. Is disposing of the collected recyclables ever a source of disagreement or conflict?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it?

123. Does someone in this household take deposit bottles and cans (soda, beer, etc.) back to the store for a refund?

(IF YES): Who?

How did this person become responsible for doing this chore?

Does anyone else in the household ever take deposit bottles and cans back for a refund? If so, who?

(IF NO): Why not?

Is this a source of disagreement? If so, how?

124. During the time that this household has been together, has the same person/people had responsibility for taking deposit bottles and cans back for a refund?

125. Has this division of responsibility changed even slightly?

(IF YES): How has it changed?

What was the cause?

When did it change?

126. Have life landmarks caused any changes in responsibility for taking deposit bottles and cans back to the store for a refund?

(IF YES): How?

127. How was responsibility assigned for taking deposit bottles and cans back for a refund? Please specify (for instance, by discussion and agreement; by schedule or who was available; by preference (whose?); it just happened that way (why?), etc.).

128. Is the assignment of responsibility for getting deposit refunds a source of disagreement?

(IF YES): Please tell me about it.

(IF NO): Why not? What keeps it from being so?

THESE ARE QUESTIONS THAT EXPLORE FAMILY OR HOUSEHOLD AND PERSONAL IDENTITY:

129. Would you say that food is an important factor in personal identity for the people in this household?

(IF YES): Please tell me who and how?

(IF NO): Why do you think that might be?

130. Is food an important factor in family or group identity for the people in this household?

(IF YES): Please tell me who and how?

(IF NO): Why do you think that might be?

131. Would you say that particular methods of preparing food are important to the individuals in this household?

(IF YES): Please tell me what methods are important to whom, and why?

(IF NO): Why do you think that might be?

132. Are there particular methods of preparing food that are important to the household or family as a whole?

(IF YES): Please tell me what methods and why?

(IF NO): Why do you think that might be?

133. Are there any particular kinds of food that are important sources of identity for individuals in this household?

(IF YES): Please tell me what foods are important for whom, and why?

(IF NO): Why do you think that might be?

134. Are there any particular kinds of food that are important to the identity of the family or household as a group?

(IF YES): Please tell me what foods are important and why?

(IF NO): Why do you think that might be?

135. Is food used as a reward, either for oneself or for others, in this household?

(If yes): Please tell me how, by whom and for whom.

(IF NO): Is there a reason why not?

136. Does food make the people in this household feel happier?

(IF YES): Please tell me what foods, and how they increase happiness?

(IF NO): Is there a reason why not?

137. Is food or the withholding of it used as a punishment for oneself or others in this household?

(IF YES): Please tell me how this occurs.

(IF NO): Is there a reason why not?

138. Is there an important factor in the food-related tasks or consumption of food in this household that hasn't been mentioned? If so, what is it?

139. Have you thought of anything that wasn't asked, or did any of your responses seem to go in a direction that wasn't followed up?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION. YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE VERY HELPFUL TO MY WORK. I TRULY APPRECIATE YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Appendix 3
Photos of “Suburbanized” Kitchens
Urban Kitchens



Figure 13: Household J12nyc83: annual income \$30,000



Figure 14: Household Y11nyc7: annual income \$50,000



Figure 15: Household N8nyc49: annual income \$58,000



Figure 16: Household T3nyc29: annual income \$75,000



Figure 17: Household Q4nyc45: annual income \$75,000

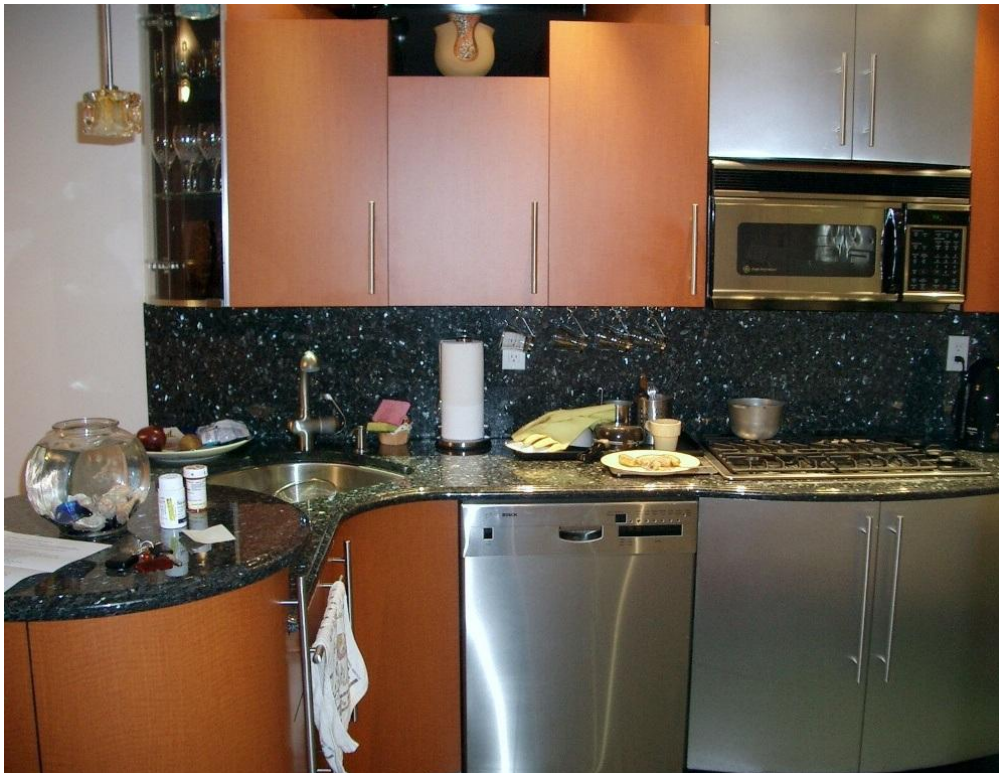


Figure 18: Household W5nyc60: annual income \$95,000



Figure 19: Household A4nyc63: annual income \$100,000



Figure 20: Household N13nyc53: annual income \$115,000



Figure 21: Household G12nyc94: annual income \$122,000



Figure 22: Household A3nyc62: annual income \$140,000

Suburban Kitchens



Figure 23: Household J10: annual income \$40,000



Figure 24: Household M10: annual income \$50,000



Figure 25: Household G13: annual income \$50,000



Figure 26: Household Z8: annual income \$60,000



Figure 27: Household H6: annual income \$100,000



Figure 28: Household O3: annual income \$100,000



Figure 29: Household X4: annual income \$119,000



Figure 30: Household O4: annual income \$160,000



Figure 31: Household D3: annual income \$170,000



Figure 32: Household M5: annual income \$270,000