Dishwasher Tetris experts and excellent meal planners: How fathers and mothers navigate foodwork and gender in the nuclear family

by

John Mills
Bachelor of Arts, Bishop's University, 2020

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Sociology

We acknowledge with respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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ABSTRACT

Feeding the family is a core component of parenthood. Foodwork—the labour of acquiring, preparing, and consuming food—is a key site where parents 'do' gender in complex ways. Through their practices of foodwork, parents can reinforce traditional norms around fathering and mothering but also challenge and transform those norms. In my thesis, I examine this complex nature of foodwork through interviews with ten parents—seven fathers and three mothers—from seven heterosexual families in the Greater Victoria area of British Columbia. I explore how fathers describe and understand the roles that they play in family foodwork as well as how both parents navigate contemporary norms and expectations regarding foodwork in a nuclear family. I identify three roles in foodwork that fathers see for themselves, each with defining characteristics. These roles can align with hegemonic masculine norms that preserve men's privilege to opt out of feeding their families. However, I also explore situations and contexts in which fathers use these roles to engage with family foodwork in thoughtful and caring ways that disrupt hegemonic masculinity. When fathers take on responsibility for foodwork, they can relieve some of the burden that neoliberal intensive mothering norms place on mothers. Parents in the nuclear family remain overwhelmingly responsible for foodwork, with limited support from broader communities. This thesis uplifts parents' struggles and successes as they navigate shifting norms around foodwork, gender, and family.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Though this thesis bears only my name at the top, it exists thanks to so many people and communities. I will list only a few below, but know that you have all shaped how I engage with the world as a scholar and a person.

Thanks to my committee member, Dr. Martha McMahon, for reminding me not to get too woolly in my thinking and writing.

Thanks to the big trees that reminded me of my very small place in broader communities, whether of organisms or of ideas.

Thanks to my cohort, who bravely started a graduate program in the midst of a global pandemic and compassionately navigated the ups and downs together.

Thanks to my parents and family for fostering my meaningful connection with foodwork through many potlucks and harvests.

Thanks to my participants for offering their precious time and energy as parents to reflect on and share their experiences with me. I have learned valuable lessons from this project, and I believe readers will as well.

Thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Anelyse Weiler, for her immense support throughout the research process. I could trust that every interaction with her promised kind encouragement, thoughtful questions, sage advice, and a moment at the end when she invariably asked, “and how are you doing outside of thesis world?”

Thanks most of all to my partner, Maya, who was graciously involved from start to finish. So many of the core ideas of my thesis, including the very topic and research questions, came from long discussions with her about gender, parenting, and food. She is brilliant and caring in turn, and I can only hope to honor her contributions to this project by being a better man who helps other men do the same.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> Talking has made me realize how integrated that [foodwork] is into so much. I never thought of all of that connected with, like, what's happening at work that day … it brings up emotions and stuff like that. (Elizabeth)

This quotation from one of my participants highlights how central food is to the human experience. She described how our interview had brought into focus the myriad linkages between her family's eating habits and disparate aspects of their lives, from work arrangements to emotional well-being. While initially she was focussed on the details of whether she or her husband completes various tasks of cooking or cleaning up, her perspective grew to recognize the broader implications of food. I am fascinated by this quality of food, how it speaks to so many facets of our lives while remaining so concrete and tangible. Food is simultaneously universal and deeply personal. Everyone needs to eat, and yet how we secure and prepare and consume food can be so vastly different.

In this thesis, I explore one small corner of this vast tapestry of food: how parents living in the Greater Victoria area of British Columbia engage in feeding their families. I use the concept of foodwork as an umbrella term to include all the work that individuals put in to feed themselves and others under their care. I focus specifically on foodwork that parents do for their families, which is only one form of foodwork that exists within food systems. Sobal (2017) presents a general model of foodwork that distinguishes between producer, consumer, and nutrition subsystems in North American food systems. He discusses households as the primary site within the consumer subsystem, while I focus more specifically on families. Sobal suggests that, within Western societies, members of most households engage in three key stages of foodwork: they acquire food primarily produced outside of the household, prepare it for household members, and consume it. Each of these stages contains numerous facets and

variations. For example, food acquisition could involve planning what needs to be acquired, making trips to stores or other locations, organizing deliveries, growing food in a garden, and other components. In my project, I use foodwork to refer to the three stages in Sobal's model, with some limited additions. For example, the model does not explicitly account for households consuming takeout or other foods which bypass the step of preparation. I recognize that Sobal's model of foodwork does not accurately describe the experiences of all families in Canada, let alone Western societies. However, it serves as an adequate framework for the experiences of parents in my project.

I explore how foodwork is bound up in gendered ideas and norms surrounding what it means to be a parent. This topic builds on a long lineage of scholars who have examined the connections between food and gender (Cairns and Johnston 2015; Daminger 2020; DeVault 1991; Hochschild and Machung 2003; Sobal 2017). Given the context of my project, I primarily draw from research on societal norms and trends in Canada and the United States over the past fifty years, though I also engage with literature examining other societies across the Global North. These gender and family scholars highlight how foodwork as a form of care has been a core way to perform femininity, while foodwork has historically been of limited importance to performances of masculinity. Within these broad patterns, there are numerous forms of both femininity and masculinity that involve foodwork in varying ways (Sobal 2017). In my research with fathers, I contribute to a burgeoning strand of literature that focusses specifically on the varying ways that men engage with foodwork (Neuman 2020; Szabo 2019). I use the framework of hegemonic masculinity to examine how these different constellations of masculinity and foodwork can uphold or challenge social norms around the most valued and honoured way to be a man in contemporary North American societies (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

I also explore some of the contemporary norms and expectations regarding what it means to parent in a nuclear family. Numerous scholars emphasize pressures upon parents in societies across the Global North—particularly mothers—to take on intensive responsibility for all aspects of their children's lives, including food (Doucet 2009; Fielding-Singh and Cooper 2022; MacKendrick and Pristavec 2019). These pressures are part of a broader trend in neoliberalism that strips away supports for nuclear families and expects them to take responsibility for themselves (Fraser 2016; Luxton 2015), and the COVID-19 pandemic [COVID] has compounded many of these demands (Carolan 2021; Swan 2020). In this research project, I work with a sample of families composed of parents in heterosexual relationships living together with children. For that reason, I frequently present statistics and literature on gender referring only to male and female experiences. For example, when I discuss parenting, I exclusively consider the roles of mothers and fathers. I use binary language as it speaks to the experiences of my participants. However, I recognize that the gender binary is not a harmless assumption, and I do not intend to reinforce stigma towards individuals and families that exist outside of the gender binary. Rather, I seek to understand the particular practices, experiences, and norms surrounding foodwork for parents in heterosexual relationships as one form of family among many. This approach avoids falsely universalizing the findings from my project as necessarily applicable to all families.

In this thesis, I engage with and contribute to literature on foodwork, gender, families, and neoliberalism. I examine how these different strands touch down in the lived experiences of parents as they engaged in family foodwork. My participants represent only a very small subset of the broader diversity of families, so my research speaks to a specific temporal, geographic, and demographic context. In that light, my thesis is guided by two central questions:

1) How do fathers describe and understand the roles that they play in family foodwork?
2) How do parents navigate contemporary norms and expectations regarding foodwork in a nuclear family?

I begin with a literature review that situates my topic in key empirical and theoretical conversations among food, gender, and family scholars. I walk through the different stages of my research design with attention to how my positionality shaped different elements of the process. I discuss key details of how I recruited and interviewed my participants as well as how I analyzed the ensuing data. In my fourth chapter, I explore my first research question. I draw on literature to develop a typology of three common roles that fathers in my sample use frame their engagement with family foodwork. I consider the structural implications of those roles for broader understandings of masculinity and fatherhood. I argue that fathers can engage in household foodwork while upholding a form of hegemonic masculinity, but foodwork has significant potential to break down inequitable gendered dynamics between parents. In my fifth chapter, I explore my second research question. I examine how parents tackle foodwork in the context of numerous societal pressures regarding the idealized nuclear family. I find that parents often challenge the gendered expectations of who will fulfill specific roles without challenging the broader intensive responsibility expected from the nuclear family. However, I emphasize some situations in which parents seek support from their communities and thus distribute those responsibilities.

My research contributes to scholarly understandings of how parents interact with gender roles. I call attention to the complex ways that parents support, challenge, and transform norms around what it means to be a mother or a father. Through my academic analysis, I seek to uplift the joys and sorrows of my participants in hopes that their experiences resonate with others. I

recognize their struggles to navigate a multitude of demands and expectations, and I celebrate the meaning they find in the not so simple act of feeding their families.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this review by clarifying the different forms of labour involved in foodwork. I also provide some key statistics that outline the empirical context of Canadian foodwork and families. I follow these statistics with core concepts and definitions in two key areas: foodwork and gender as well as foodwork and family. In each of these sections, I explore key empirical findings from research on how parents navigate foodwork. I also draw on theory as a way to situate my humble project in a broader context of sociological discussions and issues. While I have only spoken to a few parents in one city, I can nevertheless contribute to our collective understandings around how some parents experience family foodwork by linking to theories that chart paths through the messy worlds of gender and food.

Family foodwork includes all the work that parents do to feed their families. Under this umbrella, I explore several distinct forms of labour bound up in foodwork to bring some analytic specificity: physical, emotional, and cognitive. Physical labour includes all the concrete material tasks that are necessary to feed one's family: acquiring, cooking, serving, and cleaning up food. DeVault (1991) details how individuals—almost all women—go about these numerous tasks. She cautions that many forms of "invisible" labour accompany the more readily observable physical tasks. Hochschild (1979) addresses one of these forms when she defines emotion work as "the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling" (561). She suggests that individuals engage in emotion work as a way to bring their feelings in line with rules on what and how much they should feel in a given situation. DeVault (1999) examines how emotion work in the home involves managing not only one's own feelings but also the feelings of family members. For example, heterosexual wives may try to evoke feelings of comfort and satisfaction from their husbands or suppress feelings of apprehension around new foods in their children.

Daminger (2019) identifies a third dimension of household foodwork: cognitive labour, which "is best defined as the work of (1) anticipating needs; (2) identifying options for meeting those needs; (3) deciding among the options; and (4) monitoring the results" (610). She notes that these components—particularly the first and fourth—are difficult to describe in bounded terms, both for members of the household and for researchers.

All three forms of labour can and do coexist in certain foodwork tasks. For example, consider in-person shopping at a grocery store, which is one of the primary ways that people acquire food. Physically, a parent must go to the store, select desired foods, return home, and put away the food. Emotionally, the parent might need to suppress their own desires for certain foods that are not part of the family's identified needs or evoke appropriate feelings and behaviour from their children while in the store. Cognitively, the parent must anticipate what food must be bought now for future consumption, put together an appropriate list, and keep track of how different family members respond to the purchased foods. Any given task will involve a different balance of these forms of labour, but they provide a useful structure to break down the specific types of work that parents do under the umbrella of feeding the family.

In Canada and other countries in the Global North with similar economic and cultural conditions, women in heterosexual relationships tend to take on primary responsibility for household labour, including foodwork. In a survey of heterosexual couples in Canada conducted in June 2020, Zossou (2021) found that 47.5% reported that meal preparation is a task mostly done by the woman, 16.1% reported that it was mostly the man, and the remaining 35.5% reported that it was shared equally. While recent Canadian data on estimates of daily time spent doing foodwork is limited, Taillie (2018) analyzed data from a 2016 survey in the United States and found that women spent an average of 50 minutes per day engaged in food and drink

preparation, compared to an average of 20 minutes per day for men. There is some evidence that men's contributions to household foodwork have been growing over time. Moyser and Burlock (2018) report that the percentage of Canadian men aged 25-54 who participate in meal preparation grew from 30.6% in 1986 to 55.4% in 2015. However, they note that there remained a significant gap, as 72.5% of women of the same age participated in meal preparation in 2015. Evidently, women complete the majority of foodwork, though men are also engaged to varying degrees. My sample is by no means representative of this population, but these statistics clarify the general context in which my participants exist and navigate foodwork.

When seeking to explain which parent takes primary responsibility for household labour, who is at home is a key factor. Zossou (2021) found that men who worked from home were significantly more likely to engage in meal preparation than men who worked outside the home. In terms of childcare, Leclerc (2020) found in data from June 2020 that parents—male and female—who were unemployed or working from home were more likely to take on primary responsibility for parenting tasks. Both of these studies occurred in the context of the COVID pandemic, where many people suddenly transitioned to working from home. Another situation involving parents at home is parental leave. In an analysis of 2017 data on parental leave among employed or self-employed parents, Statistics Canada (2021) found that mothers are nearly twice as likely as fathers to take parental leave and that mothers on average take much longer periods of leave than fathers. I examine how parents navigate decisions—or a lack thereof—around employment and who is at home in my fifth chapter.

2.1 Foodwork and gender

Statistical analyses demonstrate that women historically have and continue to do more foodwork than men in Canada, in line with findings from the United States (Moyser and Burlock 2018; Taillie 2018; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021; Zossou 2021). Thus, foodwork is

empirically gendered in terms of who does it. I explore how this dynamic relates to cultural norms surrounding gender and foodwork. I clarify my conception of gender, and I use this lens to examine how gender shapes the ways that parents engage with foodwork.

As with any sociological concept, gender is a way to simplify the dizzying complexity of social life into recognizable shapes that fit within existing or emerging theories. I conceive of gender as a bundle, where certain traits, competencies, and social roles come together in practice and identity. In everyday life, individuals 'do' gender by drawing on elements from their particular bundle (Cairns and Johnston 2015). These bundles are by no means fixed across different times and contexts. Individuals are always consciously and unconsciously negotiating which elements have a place in their bundle and which elements they will draw on in a given situation. Furthermore, individuals face structural pressures and constraints to bundle gender in particular ways. As my research focusses on cis-gender heterosexual parents, I examine how participants engage with two such bundles: masculinity and femininity. Numerous scholars have explored how foodwork plays an essential role in traditional constructions of femininity, particularly motherhood (Cairns and Johnston 2015; Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010; DeVault 1991; Hochschild and Machung 2003; MacKendrick and Pristavec 2019). DeVault (1991) emphasizes how the act of caring for one's family through foodwork is central to dominant societal conceptions of what it means to be a good mother. While this role can be deeply meaningful and rewarding, foodwork also demands significant time and energy, which can be draining (Oleschuk 2020). Women have pushed back against being solely responsible for foodwork, yet they still tend to take on primary responsibility. In contrast, foodwork plays a far less central role in traditional forms of masculinity (Burnod et al. 2022; Klasson and Ulver 2015; Sobal 2017; Szabo 2014a, 2014b). Throughout the 20th century, the dominant expectation for

men was to provide the necessary financial resources to secure food for their families (McPhail 2009). As men have engaged more in family foodwork over time, other masculine roles have emerged, from men who engage with foodwork as a hobby or skillful pursuit to men who actively challenge gender norms through their foodwork. I explore these roles in the fourth chapter.

Evidently, both women and men 'do' gender in a number of different ways through their practices of foodwork. For this reason, I follow other scholars who emphasize the multiplicity of forms within these broad gender categories (Cairns and Johnston 2015; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Sobal 2005; Szabo 2014a). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) provide a clear and powerful conception of gender in their discussion of hegemonic masculinity. They build on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which explains how powerful social classes rely on ideological means to legitimize their domination in the minds of those that they dominate (Gramsci, Buttigieg, and Callari 1992). In terms of gender, certain norms, roles, and behaviours serve to legitimize men's authority over women in various social settings and institutions. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasize that hegemonic masculinity as a concept is defined by how it supports this unequal relationship, not necessarily by being the most common form of masculinity in a given context. Indeed, very few men might successfully embody the social ideal of masculinity, but its status as an ideal can still hold sway and render all other forms of subordinated masculinities inferior. Szabo (2014a) attempts to disentangle and clarify how men draw on these multiple masculinities in their practices of foodwork. She interviewed thirty men in Toronto—twenty-six of whom identified as heterosexual—who complete significant amounts of foodwork. While some participants did not consider foodwork as a relevant factor in their gender identity, many others emphasized how these practices set them apart from "macho

men" as gentler, more caring, more thoughtful. Men who embody these traits represent a challenge to hegemonic masculinity and a potential path towards more egalitarian relationships. As Szabo points out however, these same participants would sometimes draw on elements of hegemonic masculinity—ability to attract women, desire to be recognized as uniquely talented—while presenting their alternative masculinities. Individuals can experience and do gender in often contradictory ways that elude cohesive frameworks (Hochschild and Machung 2003). In my project, I recognize the difficulties involved in trying to tease apart the gendered dynamics of foodwork, and I carefully seek to clarify the diverse ways that my participants engage with ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

Given that women in Canada engage in more foodwork than men, how exactly do parents form and justify these unequal arrangements? Beagen et al. (2008) interview Canadian families of varying ethno-cultural groups and detail the various norms that household members use to assign responsibility for foodwork. They find that some families do indeed rely on explicit gendered assumptions that women should be responsible for food provisioning, even if other individuals help in some respect. However, Beagen et al. also describe norms that are gendered in more implicit ways: foodwork might be expected from individuals doing less paid work and/or individuals with higher standards for healthiness or quality. While these explicit and implicit gendered norms mean that women take on the lion's share of food provisioning, the general consensus in these families is that foodwork arrangements are fair. Daminger (2020) explores the process by which partners remove gender from their justifications in order to reconcile professed desires for egalitarian household labour with profoundly gendered outcomes. She identifies two key pathways that individuals use to "de-gender" processes of allocating tasks. First, participants would flexibly define variables that constrain their agency or abilities. For example, participants

explained that their desire for egalitarian divisions of labour was constrained by their simultaneous desire for arranging foodwork tasks efficiently, or for self-expression in the kitchen. However, those same participants went on to describe situations in which they accepted inefficient arrangements, such as wives repeatedly reminding their husbands—who worked in detail-oriented professions—to complete tasks. Second, participants would de-gender household foodwork by narrowing the time horizon to focus on the present situation, while discounting the historical context that led to this situation. Specifically, participants would emphasize that an unequal arrangement was the only one that would work given their current context of work schedules, family life, and personal aptitudes. However, they glossed over how past choices and experiences gave rise to that context. For example, individuals would describe how their skills naturally happen to suit certain tasks, even though they developed those skills over time by investing energy. These studies both demonstrate the extent to which individuals draw on gender—explicitly or implicitly—in their divisions of foodwork.

Gender is a key factor influencing how parents engage with and divide up responsibility for foodwork. In my project, I contribute to ongoing discussions around fathering and hegemonic masculinity, part of the broader scholarly interest in how gender roles shift over time. I explore how parents understand and value equity as one principle among many used to make decisions around who will take responsibility for foodwork.

2.2 Foodwork and family

Critical sociologists have long challenged the nuclear family as a natural or universal structure and instead have drawn attention to the specific historical conditions in which it exists. In my project, I examine the nuclear family in the current economic and cultural context of neoliberalism, a vast and often contested term. Choat (2019) contrasts how scholars in Marxist and Foucauldian theoretical traditions understand what neoliberalism is. The former frame it as a

project of the ruling class to put in place economic structures that support unfettered capital accumulation, while the latter frame it as a way of thinking where power operates through norms of competition and individual responsibility that penetrate far-ranging aspects of contemporary society. Choat argues that these two approaches are by no means mutually exclusive but rather emphasize different relationships and issues. Accordingly, I situate my project in various strands of feminist scholarship that engage with concepts from both theoretical traditions.

Foodwork is a key element of social reproduction, as these forms of labour not only materially sustain individuals but also foster relationships within social and biophysical communities (Fox 2015; Fraser 2016; Luxton 2015). The continued existence of society rests on social reproduction, and yet capitalist economies accord no value to foodwork and other tasks that occur inside the household. This system goes hand in hand with hegemonic masculinities that devalue engaging in family foodwork in favour of paid employment for men, as men maintain their dominant position over women by controlling financial resources (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Even when women access paid employment, scholars from Hochschild and Machung (2003) in the 1980s to Fraser (2016) in the 2010s emphasize that women retain domestic responsibilities. Fraser traces the many economic arrangements of care work throughout Canadian history to arrive at the contemporary predicament, where women are expected to do wage labour while also taking individual responsibility to care for their nuclear and sometimes extended families. She identifies this situation as a key example of neoliberalism: the state has retreated from publicly provided supports and guarantees for families, which offloads responsibility onto them to ensure their continued wellbeing. This example demonstrates the process of responsibilization, where parents are forced to take on more and more responsibility for their children as other supports fall away (Treloar and Funk 2008). Cairns

and Johnston (2015) critique how parents are encouraged to treat this responsibility as an opportunity by the ideology of postfeminism, which celebrates the triumph of personal choice at the individual level in arrangements of household labour. They argue that postfeminism too easily dismisses the structural forces that constrain women's agency. Luxton (2015) also critiques this ideology for further isolating the nuclear family from its broader community of friends, family, and other relationships, as decisions are situated exclusively within the household. In my fifth chapter, I explore how parents navigate neoliberal expectations of foodwork for the nuclear family.

Neoliberal constraints are particularly pronounced for poor families. Bowen, Elliott, and Brenton (2014) detail some of these issues while critiquing the normative ideal of the home-cooked meal. They argue that home-cooked meals are unattainable for many families based on their circumstances, which can foster a sense of personal failure. For example, people working several jobs may have uncertain schedules and struggle to plan times to cook and gather together. As well, time for foodwork often conflicted with time that could be spent in other pursuits. Oleschuk (2020) recognizes the potential harms of foodwork and lays out conditions under which individuals can find cooking a pleasurable activity: time, choice, aesthetic freedom, connection, and appreciation. She then examines how class shapes the ways in which individuals can access these conditions. Many lower income participants experienced time scarcity from multiple part-time jobs and limited choice among food items due to price, which imposed constraints on their access to pleasure. In the face of economic obstacles, Oleschuk emphasizes the importance of cooking as a means to connect with loved ones and be appreciated in turn; she notes that these factors remain relatively accessible across class lines. In my project, I am careful

to attend to the particular challenges faced by participants in my project with lower socio-economic status.

White, heterosexual nuclear families living together in one household are only one of the many family types, and different family types can have different implications for foodwork and parenting. Meah (2017) examines the case of heterosexual fathers—separated from their partners—who care for children through practices of foodwork. These fathers practiced many actions and traits generally seen as feminine such as planning meals in order to meet a variety of needs among eaters. Meah's study does not delve deeply into how single fathers' foodwork compares to their practices before separating with their partners. However, the case of single fathers provides insight into how changes in material conditions and social relations such as separating from one's partner precipitate new practices. Kelly and Hauck (2015) explore how queer individuals in monogamous relationships divide tasks, including foodwork. They find that few couples report an egalitarian division of household labour, with most households having a specialized arrangement where one partner who does more and the other does less. In these households, individuals offer a range of justifications for these arrangements: labour force participation, time availability, personal preferences. While many heterosexual couples rely on similar justifications, Kelly and Hauck note that queer households may nevertheless be challenging gender roles in a more nuanced way, as one partner taking on traditionally gendered traits and tasks may facilitate the other partner breaking away from these norms. Dow (2016) explores the experiences of middle-class Black mothers in navigating the cultural norms of motherhood. She argues that her participants did not necessarily compare themselves to hegemonic ideals of intensive mothering but instead asserted their own set of ideals, such as shared responsibility for childcare between families and communities. Participants described

drawing on support from family members to take care of children so that they could balance employment with parenting. This practice was not seen as a mark of shame but a way to foster connection among extended family networks. I strive to understand the particular experiences of parents in hegemonic nuclear families and how they might differ from other family structures.

My participants are all white settler parents in relatively wealthy heterosexual families, which perfectly fits the normative ideal of the Canadian nuclear family. Thus, there is a risk that my research could slip into the long sociological tradition of naturalizing and universalizing the experiences of certain households rather than understanding them as one historically contingent form of family (Fox 2015). Instead, I seek to consciously examine the specific dynamics of this family type at this point in time. I do so in order to see how families with significant privilege are constructing, maintaining, or challenging hegemonic gender ideals. I believe this is important not only to understand these idealized families but also to see how they create and shape ideals that will affect other family types.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

I situate my work within an interpretivist paradigm, where I examine how participants construct and perform their roles as parents within the constraints of their everyday lives (Tracy 2010). Through food diaries and open-ended interviews, I created a space where participants could reflect on and convey the significance of foodwork in their own terms. I acknowledge that there are empirical realities tied to foodwork that my approach does not illuminate. In any household, certain people are materially doing certain tasks in foodwork, and previous research shows that interviews—especially with only one of two parents—may not be the most accurate way to learn about that actual division (Lupton 2000). I chose an interpretivist lens not because I wish to dismiss the importance of these empirical realities but because I was interested specifically in the ways that parents describe and conceive of their roles within the nuclear family.

As a researcher, I recognize that I occupy myriad social positions, which will necessarily shape the course of my work. I come to my participants as a white settler who has not lived on these lands—the traditional territories of the lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples—for very long. I acknowledge this fact not to dispel my privilege but instead to recognize that I have been conditioned and permitted to ignore a vast diversity of experiences and foodways that depart from my 'normal.' Since my research broadly remains within the boundaries of what I know, I strive to understand my participants—also white settlers—and their experiences as bound up in certain social and biophysical networks rather than universal truths about gender and family. To understand the significance of my place in those networks, I draw from Pacheco-Vega and Parizeau (2018) who reflect on being an insider and/or outsider in relation to the communities in which they conduct research. They employ these concepts to examine how researchers might

engage with participants. In my case, I am a cisgender heterosexual man in a heterosexual relationship, so I share certain key social positions with my participants. I have navigated some similar gendered expectations and norms surrounding foodwork to my participants, though there are significant age differences between us. In this process of grappling with norms, I have developed a passion for cooking at home and have worked in an industrial kitchen. I believe strongly that foodwork can be a meaningful, enjoyable, and valuable practice for men. This belief strongly influenced my choice of research topic and sample. This insider position helped me to establish rapport with fathers and offered some insight as I sought to understand their experiences. However, I faced the constant challenge of finding the balance between using my experience as a useful tool to understand others and assuming other experiences fit within my perspective. I was also outside of my participants' community in some key ways. Importantly, I am not a parent, so I have solely experienced the dynamics of a nuclear family as a child. I have never had to define and practice my own approach to parenting, so I cannot truly grasp the demands of that role. I strive to learn from my participants as experts in their own experiences and shape questions that clarify key details of those experiences.

I am fundamentally an outsider as a researcher examining the experiences of others, and I have particular power in that role that I must use wisely (Pacheco-Vega and Parizeau 2018). I can recognize and to some extent validate the academic importance of my participants' experiences and narratives (Hiller and DiLuzio 2004). I can do so by uplifting the voices and experiences of my participants through particular channels accessible to me, such as certain academic circles or community organizations. I hope that my research can have personal impacts and meaning for participants. More broadly, I have the power and responsibility to contribute to critical conversations surrounding gender and foodwork. I engage in critical work knowing that I

am not a neutral observer of gendered inequities. Particularly as a cisgender heterosexual man, I am complicit in oppressive structures such as patriarchy, and I must treat this social position not as an unmarked category but as a specific set of lived experiences worthy of critical interrogation (Shotwell 2016). Salamon (2018) succinctly describes a vision of critical work as openness beyond established boundaries and power structures. While part of critique necessarily involves identifying the failings of a given system, Salamon argues that we must not lose sight of the necessary further step to envision different possibilities. I critique the inequities implicit in certain gendered norms and expectations in order to open the possibility for other bundles of gender that allow all parents to find their own ways to engage meaningfully in the act of feeding their families.

3.1 Sampling and Recruitment

As is the norm in qualitative work, I employed a purposive sampling strategy, where I recruited based on a set of criteria that any potential participant must meet (Ritchie et al. 2013). I had two primary criteria that guide my research design: gender and family structure. As my goal was to understand how fathers take on roles and responsibilities with regard to foodwork, I ensured that each household contained at least one male-identifying adult member and at least one dependent child living at home. I adopted a maximum variation sampling strategy in terms of how families divide up foodwork, where I sought to include households with diverse arrangements—one member taking sole responsibility, different members taking on different tasks, etc. (Ritchie et al. 2013). I chose this strategy in order to explore the different motivations and structural factors that give rise to different arrangements. Within families that met these primary criteria, I considered several secondary criteria. I sought out families who had experience with food box programs, as I was interested in the particular labour involved with this method of distribution. In the end, I did not recruit enough participants who had experience with

these programs, so I could not explore the specific foodwork dynamics involved with food boxes. As well, I was cognisant that the class of household members shapes their opportunities and experiences of feeding a family in profound ways, so I tried to include households with varying levels of income. There were also some criteria that I did not initially consider or select for, and I realized their importance later in the process. I had not thought explicitly about the age of children as a significant factor at the outset, which turned out to be an oversight on my part.

I reached out to a number of different organizations in Greater Victoria—food box programs, parenting groups, community centres—and asked them to pass on information about the study either through social media posts or emails to their mailing lists. I also approached individuals waiting in lines at farmers' markets and a food rescue program. While I did ask participants to pass on the study details to others who might be interested, I received no inquiries or interest through this attempt at snowball sampling. As I was connecting with parents who described the many demands on their time and energy, I was especially grateful for their willingness to participate in the research. As one token of gratitude, I offered each participating household a $45 gift card to either a grocery store or food box program of their choice.

In the end, I had a total of ten participants from seven households: seven fathers and three mothers (see Table 1 for complete demographic details). All participants were white individuals in heterosexual relationships. I asked participants to disclose which broad range their household income fell into, and most households made between 100 and 150 thousand dollars annually. There was a fairly narrow age range among participants: the youngest participants were thirty-two while the oldest was forty-three. Comparatively, there was a large spread in the ages of participants' children: the youngest was four months old while the oldest was fifteen. All but one

family had at least one child under the age of three, so almost all participants had been parenting an infant or toddler during the COVID pandemic.

Table 1 — Participant demographics

Name (Partner)[1]	Gender	Age	Household Income (thousands)[2]	Age of Child
Travis	M	34	100-150	15 months
Bridget	F	32		
Jack	M	35	50-100	4 months
Carolyn	F	37		
Jim (Susan)	M	40	100-150	2 years
Drew (Melanie)	M	32	0-50	13 months
Phillip (Sarah)	M	43	100-150	2, 5, and 9 years
Charles (Katy)	M	42	100-150	12 and 15 years
Paul	M	35	150+	2 and a half years
Elizabeth	F	37		

[1] Based on the wishes of my participants, I used pseudonyms for all participants as well as their children.

[2] For reference, the 2015 median and average after-tax household incomes for economic families in Victoria—two adults and two children— were approximately $100,000 and $110,000 respectively (Statistics Canada 2017). The 2020 poverty line as defined by the market basket measure was approximately $50,000 (Statistics Canada 2022b).

3.2 Data Collection

I employed two methods of data collection in the research: food diary entries from each household and semi-structured interviews conducted with parents from each household. By drawing on two distinct practices of data collection, I employed the technique of crystallization, which seeks to form a more holistic understanding of a phenomenon and its different facets (Tracy 2010). Each method required the participants to express themselves in a certain format, which elicited particular responses and experiences. Each method also placed participants into different relationships: the food diary required them to communicate explicitly with their partners about foodwork while the interview offered a space to connect with me individually.

3.2.1 Food Diary

I asked participants from each household to collaboratively record a week of basic food diary entries prior to the interview. The diaries contained two key pieces of information: what food all members of the family ate and who did the different tasks of foodwork necessary to provide that food. I asked participants to take note of any foods that require some time or energy to prepare as well as any meals, including takeout or other prepared foods. I chose these criteria in order to strike a balance between getting sufficient detail and keeping the time devoted to daily entries minimal, though several participants did ask me to further clarify what exactly would qualify. I consciously avoided a template that assumed three meals daily or that family members would eat together, as these norms can obscure the more complex realities of how food provisioning happens in families (DeVault 1991). I asked participants to make note of which foods came from a food box program, if they were currently receiving one. However, as many households were not current users, this step did not provide as much information as I had initially hoped.

The food diary provided a valuable reference point for the interviews. The entries make clear the structures and patterns of foodwork in each household, which helped me to develop a range of specific follow up questions and probes (MacDonald, Murphy, and Elliott 2018). Food diaries also prompted participants to start reflecting on these structures and having some discussions with their partners in advance of the interview. Participants described the insights or emotional reactions they experienced as a result of the process of writing entries:

> There's an underlying feeling of guilt at the inequity of the amount of work that she does to go and get food for the grocery shopping side. So, yeah, that's just the main thing that's kind of been weighing on my mind since I filled out the survey. (Jim)

This father described a dynamic that was present in his family foodwork but undiscussed prior to the food diary.

3.2.2 Interviews

I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with parents from each participating household. I ensured that I always spoke to a male parent, and I tried when possible to speak to other parents in each household. In the end, I conducted ten interviews with parents from seven households. During each interview, I consciously employed bracketing as a means to learn as much as possible from the most relevant perspectives in their own terms (Harding 1995). In my work, bracketing did not require me to ignore relevant social and historical structures that shape participant experience, nor did it mean that I became some impartial view from nowhere (Salamon 2018). Instead, I understood bracketing as a commitment to suspend beliefs that participants' experiences will conform to my expectations or adhere to my research plans. I chose to interview parents separately so that they had the space to emphasize their particular roles, feelings, and perspectives on family foodwork without pressure to form a united, cohesive narrative (Lupton 2000). To this end, I made it clear to participants that I would not share any substantial details divulged in the interviews with their partners. However, when one parent brought up something that their partner had discussed in a previous interview, it did provide an excellent opportunity to probe further into aspects I may have glossed over before. My intention was not only to dig into tensions between different parents' narratives but also to understand pieces of these narratives that fit together into a shared household identity. Separate interviews were also logistically simpler than a joint interview for participants, as one parent could provide childcare while another took the time to speak with me.

There was one case where I conducted a joint interview upon request by the parents. It was significantly more chaotic, as there was a rotating cast of one or both partners as well as an occasional appearance by their two-and-a-half-year-old child. I do feel that aspects of the joint interview are sufficiently similar to my other interviews to permit comparisons, particularly sections when I was talking to a sole parent. While it was fascinating to see how these participants created a shared narrative and addressed conflicting perspectives in real time, I was reassured that my research design of separate interviews provided a suitable path to address how fathers see themselves in terms of foodwork.

Most interviews lasted forty to sixty minutes, not counting the time beforehand to walk participants through my consent form. The shortest interview was twenty-five minutes, while the longest was seventy-five minutes. In terms of the medium, I conducted seven interviews via Zoom, two in person, and one over the phone. While I had initially hoped to conduct all my interviews in person, most participants appreciated the flexibility and lack of COVID risk that came with virtual interviews. This method also allowed participants to remain in known and private environments during some very personal conversations (Hanna and Mwale 2017). I was concerned about this mix of different interview settings would impact overall quality. I feel that Zoom was an acceptable substitute for in-person conversations. The phone interview was by far the shortest and most superficial, which I believe was partially but not entirely due to the medium.

3.3 Data Analysis

Immediately following each interview, I briefly reflected on key themes or aspects of our conversation and took a few notes while the information was still fresh in my mind. This process also provided an excellent opportunity to identify areas that I could improve as an interviewer (e.g. asking more follow up questions). All of my participants gave permission for me to record

our interviews, so I was able to transcribe them word for word. I used Microsoft Word's online speech to text feature for each recording to save time and then thoroughly reviewed the transcripts to edit for sentence structure and ensure accuracy. I transcribed as I was completing interviews, but I waited to begin coding until I had finished my data collection. I used NVivo not only to conduct my coding but also as a means of organizing all the data associated with the project: interview transcripts, food diaries, pieces of reflexive writing that I did throughout the research process.

I began my data analysis by coding inductively in order to center the ways that participants chose to express their experiences and ideas. I drew inspiration from Braun and Clarke (2006) and their broad stages for thoughtful and rigorous thematic analysis. Following an initial round of open coding, I reviewed codes in order to scope them appropriately, collapsing similar codes and fleshing out the details of codes that were too vague. I then proceeded to identify themes in the data that made sense of the relationships and patterns between codes. In this step, I relied on guidance from Small (2009). He warns that qualitative researchers might be tempted to reach conclusions based on statistical inference, where they assume that their participants are representative of broader populations. However, qualitative studies such as my own have sample sizes that are far too small to employ statistical methods. Instead, Small counsels researchers to rely on logical inference, where they explicate the mechanisms or dynamics at play in their studies in order to justify their assertions. As I conducted my data analysis, I tried to avoid simplistically attributing any differences between the responses of male and female participants to gender. Instead, I forced myself to consider whether or not there was an underlying gendered logic that could explain a given phenomenon: for example, many fathers did not plan meals, which connects to a broader concept of cognitive labour divisions (Daminger

2019). Throughout the process of analysis, themes did not simply emerge; I actively participated in the co-creation of knowledge (Hiller and DiLuzio 2004). I made decisions of which patterns to focus on and develop through the writing process. These decisions were based on my own beliefs of what I believed was most significant but also justified in relation to key topics or areas within relevant literature. When I was drawing from literature in my analysis, I made an effort to seek out and engage with research conducted by excellent female scholars and with female participants. Harding (1995) argues using standpoint theory that researchers must take social position into account when they seek to gain less false and distorted accounts of the world, as privileged members of a system are more intimately beholden to that system's logic. In the case of my research, men—including myself—are less likely to see the inherent limits and oppressions of patriarchy such as the naturalized expectation that women are solely responsible for foodwork. As such, I wanted to ensure my analysis was informed by concepts arising from generations of excellent scholarship that foregrounds women's experiences in foodwork.

CHAPTER FOUR: FATHERS AND FOODWORK

Foodwork is broadly gendered as a feminine task within families, both in terms of empirical realities and cultural discourses. In the context of a heterosexual relationship, mothers tend to shoulder the bulk of foodwork. However, fathers also take on a range of responsibilities in different households. In this chapter, I explore two key questions. Firstly, how do fathers frame their roles with family foodwork? This question certainly involves what fathers actually do, but it emphasizes the ways that fathers understand themselves and their place within the family. This lens leads into the second question: how do the roles that fathers play in family foodwork relate to hegemonic masculinity? In some cases, these roles helped support hegemonic masculinity, while other situations transcended or actively challenged hegemonic masculinity.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) revisit the concept of hegemonic masculinity—developed by Connell and other scholars in the 1980s—in order to clarify definitions and address critiques. They emphasize that hegemonic masculinity is inherently relational in that societies value one form of gender identity and expression above others. The model of hegemonic masculinity is a way to understand how patriarchy functions in society, so it assumes that the most valued form of masculinity must function to legitimize and thus perpetuate patriarchal power imbalances between men and women. I bring their work in conversation with Sobal (2017), who explores how men might do gender in ways that challenge the hegemonic form. He raises two concepts: emancipated masculinities that seek to step outside the framework of hegemonic and subordinated, and polemic masculinities that actively work to undermine that same framework. Szabo (2014b) examines how men enact polemic masculinities in relation to foodwork by drawing on what she calls “traditional culinary femininities”, where cooking and other foodwork are seen as forms of care for family and loved ones. These men discuss their role

in terms of nurturing their families and creating comforting home environments. Szabo reinforces that these orientations towards foodwork often coexist with more established masculine approaches, such as cooking in terms of skill or artistry. I conceptualize this complex diversity of gender forms in Table 2, based on whether the forms support or challenge the hegemonic framework as well as whether they do so actively or passively. Though I recognize the importance of intentions, I focus primarily on the concrete outcomes of certain attitudes or behaviours. As such, I classify marginalized masculinities as supporting, even though men in this category may very much wish to escape or eviscerate the existing framework.

Table 2 — An extended hegemonic masculinity framework

	Active	**Passive**
Support	Hegemonic	Complicit/Marginalized
Challenge	Polemic	Emancipated

The gendered connotations and dynamics of foodwork are not necessarily static over time. There have been some broad shifts in foodwork across recent generations. Men in general have increased their time spent in foodwork, and this trend is particularly significant for younger men (Daminger 2020; Szabo 2019). Many scholars use the language of tradition to describe foodwork arrangements in which women take primary or sole responsibility (Burnod et al. 2022; DeVault 1991; van Hooff 2011; Klasson and Ulver 2015; Szabo 2014b). Daminger (2020) documents numerous surveys and studies that show a shift in beliefs away from traditional gender roles in North America. Against this backdrop, she explores how parents who profess egalitarian values around gender and household labour nevertheless fall into the very traditional arrangements that they critique. I examine how shifting ideas around what masculinity is and should be touch down in the lives of my participants.

Scholars of household labour explore numerous ways in which families divide foodwork and justify those decisions. Some rationales are based on work and other factors. One such justification is time availability, where the partner who is working fewer hours or has fewer commitments outside the household takes on a larger share of foodwork (Beagan et al. 2008; van Hooff 2011; Kelly and Hauck 2015). A related but distinct justification is relative resources, where the partner with less power in the relationship dynamic due to income or other factors may face pressure—from others and from internalized norms—to take on a larger share of foodwork (Daminger 2020; Kelly and Hauck 2015). These external factors are by no means fixed. Many families place value on the idea of flexibility, where roles shift depending on the circumstances (Daminger 2020). Other rationales are based on personal qualities. Some families describe allocating foodwork based on who is more competent and thus can complete tasks more efficiently (Daminger 2020; Lupton 2000). Other families emphasize that the person who finds foodwork more enjoyable and fulfilling should take it on (Lupton 2000). Feminist scholars have called attention to the stark gendered implications of these principles. They note that the person described by all of these justifications aligns almost perfectly with the traditional view of femininity (Beagan et al. 2008; Daminger 2020). This logic suggests that, if partners want to achieve more egalitarian divisions of labour, they either need to explicitly strive towards equality as an overriding goal or address the gendered dynamics that underly a given principle such as time availability.

In this chapter, I develop a typology of fathers' roles in foodwork composed of three major types found in existing literature: father as helper, father as artisan, and father as leader (see Table 3 for a summary of this typology). I briefly introduce the defining characteristics and some forms of labour involved with each role. I then examine each role using the framework of

hegemonic masculinity to clarify the structural implications of how fathers understand themselves. Each role captures certain characteristics and activities described by fathers in the sample, but a role does not necessarily encapsulate a particular individual. Indeed, many fathers framed their experiences using multiple, sometimes seemingly contradictory roles. I investigate what this complex situation reveals about how fathers shift their behaviours and self-perceptions over time and across different circumstances. I also tease apart the place of equality—a core concept within hegemonic masculinity—alongside other principles in how fathers and mothers discuss their divisions of foodwork. I close the chapter by reflecting on both the broad and personal implications of the themes.

Table 3 — Typology of fathers' foodwork

Type	**Defining characteristics**	**Forms of masculinity involved**
Helper	Spontaneous contributions to foodwork and emphasis on external constraints	Hegemonic and emancipated
Artisan	Vision of foodwork as a realm of both passion and skill	Complicit and polemic
Leader	Primary responsibility for foodwork tasks or overall provisioning	Polemic and emancipated

4.1 Father as helper

All of the fathers in my sample completed at least some foodwork. They frequently did so as a way to support their female partners, who took on primary responsibility for the overall structure and plan. I characterize this role as being a helper in foodwork, as even in times or situations where the father might physically perform most of the foodwork, they described their contribution as supplementing and building on the work of their partner. Fathers who saw themselves as helpers emphasized how they pitch in spontaneously and as able within certain constraints, primarily paid work.

Five out of seven fathers in my sample described themselves as more spontaneous than their female partners when it comes to foodwork and thus able to fill in the gaps to make sure the family was fed. Charles works full-time as an engineer, but he also takes on a significant role feeding his two teenage children alongside his wife Katy. Due to her health struggles, Charles estimated that he has gone from doing 20% to 60-70% of physical household foodwork. However, Katy still plans meals, shops online, and does as much prep as she is able to. He described his role as finishing tasks and filling in as needed:

> We don't really plan it out, it's just, you know? Like she's usually up pretty late 'cause she can't sleep, so she'll—if she has the energy, she'll make the lunches, right? Make the bagels or whatever. Prep the lunch and write down, "OK, here's what you guys can take." And then, in the morning, you know, for afternoon, if the lunches aren't made, then I'll just make them. So, dinners, same kind of thing.

Charles is very involved in feeding his family, yet he still characterizes his role as helping to fill in the gaps in Katy's general plan. This contrast between the mother as planner and the father as spontaneous helper came out particularly clearly in several exchanges between Elizabeth and Paul. Elizabeth currently works outside the home as a legal assistant and so prepares food on Sundays for the week ahead. Paul balances managing his company from home and caring for their child Eva. He goes with Eva to his own parents' house during the week, where they help with foodwork and childcare. Elizabeth and Paul both asserted the importance of their respective roles in feeding their family:

> E: It's called, 'Mommy puts it in the family calendar and then Daddy forgets about it.' No, not quite.
>
> P: Or you could tell the story about how Mommy is exhausted after work and Daddy has to pick up the pieces and make sure that Eva [their child] gets fed dinner. There's different versions of that story depending how you want to tell the story, *right?*

In a joking tone, Elizabeth expresses some frustration about her cognitive labour of scheduling that seemingly falls by the wayside. Paul responds quickly to emphasize his role as a father, where he "has to pick up the pieces" and make ends meet. At another point, while discussing how they will navigate reduced support from Paul's parents, they express a similar moment of tension between their two roles:

> E: Well, and I feel like, if I can make a big lasagna, if I can make a big pot of chili that's in the fridge… I mean okay, after two or three days, you're like "I don't want to eat lasagna again" but at least it's there so that if you need…
>
> P: And if God forbid you got to go buy one out of the freezer—
>
> E: Yes, I know [laughs]
>
> P: —at the grocery store, sure it has too much salt but whatever. What else, what's the other options?
>
> E: I know but I'm just trying to tell you how I think I help.

Paul accepts the potential nutritional deficiencies of prepared foods in order to ensure that everyone can be fed as plans shift. Elizabeth expresses some concern that this arrangement might undercut her efforts to plan and provide healthy meals on demand. In both instances, Paul and Elizabeth recognize the value of one another's contributions to the family. The conflict arises when one feels that the other is minimizing their role in family foodwork. In all of these instances, fathers are actively engaging in foodwork. They frame this engagement as stepping in to support their partners in feeding the family.

Three of seven fathers explained their role as helpers in terms of the constraints that limit their ability to take on foodwork. For Jack, his busy work schedule as a teacher and coach was the primary barrier to being more involved at home. His partner Carolyn is currently on parental leave from her position as a teacher with their four month old Jessie. When asked about what roles in foodwork he takes on, he initially responded "I work 12-15 hour days. So [pauses] yeah. My role is to buy the food." As the interview progressed, he eventually brought up other ways

that he pitches in, always within a clear dynamic of supporting his partner's existing planning and structure:

> Both of us are good cooks and have skills in the kitchen so. Um, yeah, in that sense a lot of the times Carolyn will do a lot of the prep work and planning and whatnot and when I get home I'll just kind of take over if he [Jessie] just hasn't eat or there's stuff that I can do.

Jack made clear that he is competent in the kitchen, so his role is not limited by skill. Instead, the dominant limiting factor was prolonged work hours. He stresses elsewhere that the current arrangement is temporary, as it is based on the academic year. Come summer, he will have more time to devote to foodwork and childcare. A few other fathers echoed this sentiment. They described themselves as having considerable ability in the kitchen but simply lacking the time to take on responsibility for significant portions of foodwork.

Fathers were not blasé when discussing these constraints. Several participants expressed a sense of guilt about failing to adequately support their partners in family foodwork. When asked about what a fair division of foodwork means to him, Jack responded that his current situation is "just not fair. And we don't really—we can't really talk about who's cooking because I'm at work all day every day and she's at home." He seemed to view this situation with a sense of frustration and desire to change, which he expressed frequently throughout the interview. Phillip shared some of these feelings as another teacher who looked forward to having more time for foodwork come summer. These fathers were working more hours and earning more than their partners and felt guilty rather than proud of their role as the traditional masculine breadwinner in terms of foodwork. I explore this trend in greater depth in the fifth chapter, but it featured prominently in conversations about the helper role. Even fathers with significant roles in the family experienced guilt about their contribution. In Jim and Susan's household, most foodwork tasks were divided between them, but she did the vast majority of grocery shopping. At the end of the interview, Jim

described his main takeaway from the research process as “an underlying feeling of guilt at the inequity of the amount of work that she does to go and get food for the grocery shopping side.” While Jim was a very active participant in household foodwork, he nevertheless felt like he was falling short in one aspect.

Fathers in the helper role were certainly a part of household foodwork, but they had clear limits to their involvement. Some limits were based on following rather than making plans, while others were tied to constraints on time and energy. They were not necessarily happy or satisfied with their role as helpers, which speaks to some dissatisfaction among my male participants with the traditional norm of breadwinning as a father’s sole foodwork responsibility. Fathers still asserted that their role as helpers was a valuable contribution to feeding their families.

4.2 Father as artisan

Fathers often discussed foodwork as a task within household labour that gave them particular satisfaction and required particular skill. I identify these two traits—passion and skill—as the core features of the artisan type. These fathers discussed the rich satisfaction in preparing complex dishes and honing their craft in the kitchen.

Six of seven fathers described the emotions that are bound up in their practices of foodwork, with particular emphasis on cooking. Several fathers stressed that cooking can and should be an enjoyable activity. Travis noted that he “actually really deeply do[es] enjoy cooking”, so he is more than happy to take it on as a task within the household. When asked how he understands a fair division of foodwork, Phillip’s immediate response was “making sure that everyone is feeling sort of positive and engaged.” Rather than emphasizing the time that people spend on foodwork, Phillip connected fairness to emotional fulfillment, where people do not just do foodwork but enjoy their particular roles. Phillip described his passion for acquiring and

preparing food, and he sought to ensure that his family could find similar satisfaction from foodwork in their own way. For example, he made an effort to include his children in cooking to varying degrees depending on their abilities and encouraged them to forage in the garden. Other fathers emphasized these potential connections that food can foster. When Paul described his relationship to cooking, he emphasized that "there's been a social kind of party aspect of it, more so than a chore I guess somehow, and that is still there." Foodwork as a chore connotes monotony and necessity, which was certainly how some participants described it. Jim relied on a "takeout night every couple of weeks when things get overwhelming or miserable." However, Paul chose to emphasize the "party aspect" of foodwork, which connotes not only mirth but also sociality. Phillip echoed this sentiment when he expressed that food can and should be about "community and connection." Fathers in the artisan role described their passion for foodwork, both in terms of the foodwork itself and the emotional connections it fostered with their family and friends.

Fathers in the artisan role contrasted their relationship with foodwork to their wives, who were comparatively less enthused. Phillip described his wife's cooking style as more "practical" when compared to his own:

> My wife [pauses] is—not as much as she used to be—but, she used to be sort of like self-conscious that her cooking was more about... like she used to do volunteer for like yoga camps and bulk cooking and stuff like that—but more about like practical, like, make a whole bunch and eat it for a few days, and that kind of stuff. Whereas sometimes when I'm cooking and I—it takes sometimes more time, or there's more steps, or more ingredients, or whatever—she sometimes feels like I'm getting overly elaborate, and, but for me I think it's more because like, it's about those relationships and interests, like I—of course she knows that that's important stuff for me—so when we both do the same role, it looks very different, I guess, is what I'm kinda getting at there too.

Sarah is quite competent in her cooking by Phillip's account, and she takes on a significant portion of family foodwork. However, she does not share his passion for foodwork and cooking

in particular. He juxtaposed her “practical” style of “bulk cooking” with his more involved approach that can involve more time, steps, and ingredients. This example makes clear that the artisan role is a particular orientation towards foodwork, not just significant time spent doing foodwork. Travis discussed a similar dynamic with his partner around foodwork:

> Bridget never really seemed to enjoy cooking that much, and wasn't usually too proud of her cooking creations, whereas I would sometimes, you know, obsess about recreating a certain dish or things like that.

While Bridget can cook, Travis suggested that the process does not have the same emotional resonance for her, as she derives neither joy nor pride from it. On the other hand, Travis will “obsess” about cooking. Paul was not primarily responsible for feeding his family at the point of the interview, but he emphasized that he had got his wife interested in cooking when they met. He recounted how foodwork has always been a source of fun for him, and he helped his wife develop her own passion for cooking over the course of their relationship. Fathers drew clear contrasts between their approach to foodwork and their partners.

While fathers certainly expressed a sense of joy surrounding foodwork, they did recognize the emotional toll of cultivating excitement about foodwork in themselves and their families, particularly their children. Jim felt that cooking regularly for his family saps his enthusiasm for the task: “I'd love to not have to cook every single night. I find that I'm much more recharged after a couple of days off to come back in and plan a meal and execute it and do something like that.” He described an ideal situation where both he and his wife could have more time away from the kitchen, as it would “keep the energy level and the passion level high on cooking.” Other fathers did not discuss this emotional work as openly, but several fathers did recognize the significant time and energy necessary to engage children in cooking. Charles felt that as his children have grown older, “it’s harder to get them to come help prep stuff, unless

you're forcing them." Thus, while passion is a key feature of the artisan role, fathers described some situations in which they struggled to bolster their own enthusiasm or others.

Fathers in the artisan role also emphasized the skills and expertise involved with foodwork. Travis described "a state of flow" that he taps into when he is balancing all the different tasks involved in cooking a meal. Even when he was describing a self-proclaimed failed new recipe, he chose to emphasize that "every new thing I try is just like an added little piece to my cooking ability." Skill was not necessarily limited to the realm of cooking. Phillip prioritized finding local food—primarily organic or otherwise sustainably produced—for his family, which involved time spent researching sources and building relationships with producers. These themes of skill and expertise connect with broader cultural narratives about masculinity and food in the professional context. Phillip explained how his background in professional contexts influences his approach to foodwork:

> Having worked in professional kitchens, I get a bit gruff, and sometimes—not all the time—but like, and sometimes like it's... Sarah takes it harder than it was intended [laughs] I guess?

He clearly identified how his previous experiences growing up around and working with chefs—who were predominantly male—has led to a more "gruff" communication style. This phrasing evokes a tough and blunt male professional who prioritizes the most efficient way to complete a task. While other fathers in the artisan role may not have worked in professional food environments, they saw their foodwork in similar terms. Cairns et al. (2010) explore how gender manifests in the motivations and practices of self-proclaimed foodies. They found that male foodies emphasized the importance of building knowledge about food and cooking. These participants discussed chefs whose work inspired them to cook and dishes that they had honed to

perfection over time. Though few fathers in my sample explicitly discussed professional foodwork settings, they did view themselves as honing skills.

I chose the term artisan because of its connotations of skilled craftsmanship, and fathers in this role described how their tools—kitchen gear—are part of their relationship with foodwork. Jim framed his feelings about foodwork in terms of active tasks involving kitchen gear: “I enjoy playing with sharp knives and, you know, chopping vegetables and barbecuing things.” While cutting food for dinner seems somewhat banal, “playing with sharp knives” invokes a sense of risk that demands skill to appropriately manage. These relationships with gear have sentimental significance for several fathers within the sample. Charles bakes bread with the help of “a little wooden grain mill thing that I've been grinding grain with for probably 20 years.” Travis described an even deeper attachment to his cast iron frying pan:

> I really get excited about the fact that like, you know, I've cooked like hundreds and hundreds of meals on this one pan over and over. It's like a special thing to me, and maintaining its condition... You know, cleaning it, oiling it. It's kind of a special thing for me. It's kind of like a symbolic of all our kitchen gadgets and everything, it's the one thing that I think symbolizes like food for our family.

Where others might simply view a pan as a simple tool, Travis outlines a rich symbolism which binds it up with honing his craft and feeding his family. This pan is an apt representation of the way that fathers in the artisan role emphasize the passion and skill that they bring to everyday tasks in foodwork, particularly cooking.

4.3 Father as leader

Some fathers had a definite sense of primary responsibility for foodwork, which I characterize as the leader. In most cases, this role manifested as fathers taking on a particular task or component of family foodwork as their responsibility, from baking bread to acquiring

food to preparing meals. However, there was one father—Travis—who was in charge of almost all aspects of foodwork in his household.

The core feature of the leader role is the sense of underlying responsibility for foodwork. When asked about Susan and his division of cooking, Jim reported that "it's supposed to be shared, but depending on energy levels and sort of moods and who's the preferential parent that week in Ava's mind [their daughter], it sometimes ends up more on my plate." Thus, despite a general effort to equality, he described feeling that he was ultimately responsible to ensure that meals got on the table:

> If it's a day that originally she [Susan] was kind of on the books to cook during the week, and I get home and there's sort of nothing looking like there's any sort of plan, then I'll just sort of come up with something or thaw out some pre-made thing from however long ago and just throw that in the mix.

Jim certainly demonstrated spontaneity in this example. However, I argue that it is meaningfully different from the helper role because it comes from a place of underlying responsibility rather than a supplement to his wife's primary role in planning foodwork. Thus, Jim exemplified in this moment the leader role.

Fathers in the sample took primary responsibility for some foodwork tasks, ranging significantly in scale. Jim and Charles both baked bread on a regular basis. Drew had experimented in previous years with growing a small vegetable garden in containers on his deck and recently gained access to a plot in a local community garden for the upcoming season. Carolyn reported that Jack had expressed interest in hosting a weekly brunch for a group of their friends:

> It's Jack's idea, and I really like it. I think it's a nice idea, so he'll probably do the cooking. So we talked about that, it's like 'this is your idea, and I'll try to help, but you can, you know, cook the eggs and the bacon, or whatever it is for our friends.'

Carolyn made clear that she would take the helper role in this particular situation, in contrast to the general dynamic in their foodwork. These fathers took primary responsibility for fairly bounded tasks, but some fathers were leaders on a larger scale. Phillip takes on food acquisition as his primary responsibility within family foodwork: “It's really important for me to buy farmer direct when we can and get local ethical meat and that kind of stuff. So I focus more on that.” He makes trips to local farms and pick ups for various food box programs in order to secure food that fits his values. His situation exemplifies a common crossover between the leader and artisan roles. Many of the fathers discussed above took on leadership in foodwork tasks or areas that were meaningful and usually enjoyable for them.

Travis was the exception in my sample as a father who completes the vast majority of household foodwork. He prepares most meals for the family from start to finish in the process, though his wife does prepare her own breakfast and cooks some meals on weekends. Grocery shopping is a shared task, due in some part to Travis’ issues with eyesight that preclude him from driving. Even in this realm though, he identified himself as “the leader on those group shopping trips” since he keeps track of what is on their list and where it is located within the store. Bridget plays a “supporting” role in this situation, noticing items that might not be on the list. Travis noted that he has stepped up his leadership in foodwork in response to the birth of their child:

> I've basically always done a lot of the planning and preparation. Bridget and I have often done the shopping together, and then clean up... Bridget, we usually had a deal: I cook, she cleans. But now that we have a baby there's so much more to do. I'm just kind of like, I can clean as I cook, and then just tidy up after.

When I spoke to Travis, he was taking parental leave to be with Martin, which meant he had even more time at home during the day when he could multitask, caring for Martin while engaging in foodwork.

Women in the sample were overwhelmingly appreciative of their male partners' taking on primary responsibility for foodwork. Several participants did describe a sense of guilt that they were not adequately performing a traditional version of femininity. Bridget expressed an underlying guilt as the "female in the home not doing, like, majority of the cooking. I feel this like weird sense like I need to be doing it, which is ridiculous. Like I know I shouldn't, but I do feel that guilt." Despite appreciating her partner for his foodwork, despite identifying the gendered expectation upon her, Bridget still struggled to shake off the deep-rooted feelings of inadequacy bound up in her situation. While Travis was the most involved father in terms of foodwork, other women expressed similar feelings. Elizabeth described feeling guilty when she is drained of energy at the end of the workday and so relies on Paul to heat up leftovers and feed Eva. Phillip reported that his wife Sarah has struggled with feeling "self-conscious" about her very plain and practical cooking style. In all these cases, women simultaneously welcomed and struggled with their male partners taking on significant responsibilities within the home.

Fathers who took on the leader role were not necessarily in charge of every aspect of foodwork. However, they assumed primary responsibility in at least some way.

4.4 Fathers' foodwork and hegemonic masculinity

If fathers in my sample frequently understood themselves as playing multiple roles within their families, what is the analytic value of delineating behaviours and perceptions into a typology? I argue that these roles map out different ways of being a father, what Sobal (2005) terms different scripts of masculinity and parenting. By separating out each role, I can more closely examine how they contribute to or subvert the framework of hegemonic masculinity.

I argue—in line with other scholars—that performing hegemonic masculinity as a father can and sometimes does involve foodwork, which marks a departure from a traditional ideal of

hegemonic masculinity where men completely eschew any household labour (Sobal 2017). Burnod et al. (2022) find that Australian men in their sample dismiss the idea of a man who does not contribute to foodwork as antiquated and actively distance themselves from such a figure. Neuman (2020) argues that a similar shift is occurring across the Nordic countries; he suggests that fathers now view foodwork as an integral part of their role in the family. When discussing what hegemonic masculinity is, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) stress the regional and contextual nature of the concept. For my project, the participants were all living within Greater Victoria, which I recognize as an urban area with generally progressive values likely forms a specific subculture of masculinity that is distinct from other regions of the province or country. My findings speak to a specific context, in which I argue foodwork has come to have a place within hegemonic masculinity. In my sample, every father engaged to some extent in foodwork. However, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) caution that hegemonic masculinity is not just the dominant form of masculinity but rather the one that men must aspire to perform. I find two major pieces of evidence in my data to support the idea that men indeed aspire to perform some foodwork: the way that participants distanced themselves from the traditional arrangements of their parents, and the way that participants described the guilt associated with not performing foodwork.

Many participants distanced themselves from how their own parents related to foodwork and food. When participants described their experiences growing up in heterosexual families, most of them emphasized their mothers taking responsibility for foodwork. They generally drew a clear contrast between their own households and their parents in terms of foodwork and gender norms. Charles reflected on how his parents lived in a different “era”:

> To me personally, it's been kind of normal that you'd share and do things together. That's not how I grew up. Like my mum pretty much did everything, right? Like 98, you know,

> high 90s percentage. Like, all the shopping, all the planning, all the prep. So unless my mom was away, which she almost never was 'cause she's basically stay at home, she did everything, right? So—and same with Katy's family? Yeah, same kind of thing, right? Like I guess that era was traditional, and that's how it was.

Charles is in his early forties, so he grew up in the 1980s. He described this era as "traditional", which fits into how scholars typically characterize family structures that strongly tie femininity and mothering to food. While he suggests that his mother doing almost all the foodwork was "how it was", Moyser and Burlock (2018) report that roughly 30% of Canadian men aged 25-54 in 1986 engaged at least to some extent in meal preparation, which contextualizes how Charles remembers and thus constructs this past. He implicitly suggests that there has been a change in eras from then to now, which has involved a change in foodwork roles for parents. He suggests that it is now "normal" to assume that both men and women in heterosexual relationships while engage in foodwork. Participants also dismissed the dietary preferences of their parents as evidence of them being traditional. Phillip characterized his mother-in-law as having "restrictive ideas about what she can and should eat." Similarly, Jim expressed that he "grew up with relatively bland food." Bridget described an experience of growing apart from her mother in terms of taste:

> Like my mom, I don't know when we went home, she's just like thought, what does she think? She thought like ginger beef was like too spicy or something, and I was like "I don't even know it was spicy", you know? She's just like not used to like anything other than just like her salt and pepper.

The "salt and pepper" parent who eschews foods from outside their narrow comfort zone meshes into the general narrative of adhering to tradition. McPhail, Beagan, and Chapman (2012) explore how certain types of food or dishes have strong, readily identifiable gendered connotations, and I argue that this logic extends to the connotations of certain diets. Participants went to lengths to distance themselves from their parents and some of the ways that they had

interacted with food and foodwork, which serves to demonstrate how ideals of hegemonic masculinity have shifted over time.

Another key piece of evidence of shifting ideals is that fathers described feeling guilty when they made insufficient contributions to foodwork in their estimation. As hegemonic masculinity describes the cultural ideal that men measure themselves against, this guilt suggests that men feel like they should take on at least some foodwork in their families. For example, the two teachers—Philip and Jack—described how they felt guilty about their current level of contributions and plan to engage more extensively in household labour come the summer. A telling corollary to the guilt of fathers is the situations where mothers felt guilt about inadequate foodwork. When some female participants ceded responsibility to their male partners, they described feeling guilty. I argue that this situation helps mark the limits of what is asked of men under hegemonic masculinity. While men might reasonably be expected to do some foodwork, women clearly do not feel released from the expectations of primary responsibility that were present in traditional femininity (Daminger 2020; DeVault 1999; Hochschild and Machung 2003). I argue that hegemonic masculinity—at least in the context of my research—has come to involve limited participation in foodwork.

4.4.1 Masculinities – helper

I argue that the helper role contains key aspects of hegemonic masculinity, as it does require that fathers engage to some extent with foodwork. However, while fathers in this role may perform some foodwork, they have certain privileges that maintain a structural power imbalance between men and women in heterosexual relationships. Crucially, these fathers generally preserve the power to opt out of foodwork, as they are not primarily responsible. Fathers could cite their busy work lives or commitments outside the household as factors that

limit their capacity to perform foodwork and rely on their partners to shoulder more foodwork. This was not always the case. For Charles and Katy, her health meant that he had little option but to step in when her capacity was exhausted on a given day. Thus, I argue their particular situation is more accurately characterized as a form of emancipated masculinity, which diverges from hegemonic masculinity in significant ways without fundamentally challenging the underlying dynamics (Sobal 2017). Generally however, fathers who were helpers could step back from foodwork responsibilities knowing that their partners could ensure that their families were fed at the end of the day.

One key concept tying the helper role to hegemonic masculinity is cognitive labour. The helper role involves minimal cognitive labour, and the disparity in cognitive labour loads in foodwork can be ignored or written off as a matter of personality. As I noted, the helper role is characterized by spontaneity, and spontaneous fathers benefit from the work that their partners do to plan and organize situations. This is not to discount the value of spontaneous contributions but rather to recognize the totality of labour involved in foodwork.

Daminger (2019) notes that partners more readily gloss over the amount of cognitive labour that they do—or do not—perform, as it is less tangible and visible than other tasks, such as physically cooking a meal or making a trip to the store. This relative invisibility fits neatly within the idea of hegemonic masculinity, as prominent tasks lend themselves better serve to legitimize men as sufficiently contributing members of a relationship. Szabo (2014a) highlights how men may frame their cooking and other foodwork skills as impressive, even as they discuss how those skills set themselves apart from self-aggrandizing macho men. It is much more difficult to demonstratively perform tasks such as keeping track how much milk is in the fridge or pondering different diet options for an infant.

The abstract nature of cognitive labour also lends itself to being considered a function of someone's personality type rather than a learned and practiced skill. Drew expressed that he struggles with "figuring out what to eat and what to make. I don't really like that part 'cause I'm usually [pauses] what's the word? I don't make a decision easy when it comes to that kind of stuff. Indecisive." Rather than describing meal planning as a skill, Drew connected it to his broader personality. Carolyn also framed her family's division of labour according to personal characteristics: "Maybe it's just my personality to like, want to plan. So maybe it just falls into my domain that I'm like the one initiating the plan." In terms of her partner, she stated that "Jack is really good about just going with the flow", so he is well suited to follow her plans and structure. Carolyn values having a partner capable of foodwork who she can delegate to as needed. However, she also recognizes at another point this decision making is a form of labour and drains her energy. DeVault (1991) critiques the notion that women innately posses certain traits or aptitudes. She emphasizes the work necessary to cultivate and maintain a caring disposition. Almost thirty years later, Daminger (2020) reiterates this point in her arguments about how discussions of personality mask the more complex reality that people can develop skills and employ them in different contexts. She notes that men with complex jobs requiring decision making and planning may describe themselves in the home as someone who struggles to do those very things. Thus, personality obscures the socialization and practice necessary to master certain foodwork tasks, and the helper role can fall into this trap.

4.4.2 Masculinities – artisan

The artisan role can provide a way for some men to enter the domestic sphere and take on labour traditionally seen as feminine without challenging their masculine identity, which speaks to the changing ideals around hegemonic masculinity and foodwork. The artisan role emphasizes

an emotional connection to food and foodwork. Several fathers discussed their love of foodwork, a theme which many other gender scholars have noted. Cairns et al. (2010) emphasize that men often perform foodwork as a task for personal enjoyment or public spectacle rather than an act of care. While this was sometimes the case for my participants, they also described how their passion helps them connect with their families. Phillip stated that he "really take[s] pride in how my family eats", and other fathers discussed similar sentiments of caring for their families by providing good food. Importantly, Cairns et al. draw on a sample of self-described foodies, not all of whom are parents. I believe this difference in our samples is important, as fatherhood was a key way that many of my participants connected the artisan role to care (Szabo 2014b). I draw this contrast with the literature not to make frequency-based claims about which roles men most often take on but rather to help make clear the full range of ways that men engage in foodwork.

The artisan role allows men to develop and value their skill in foodwork. Travis described his daily cleaning routines using the language of expertise: "I'm a bit of a Tetris expert when it comes to loading the dishwasher." He recast a mundane task as a game, something worthy of practice and perfection. Men who see themselves as artisans are motivated to take on and commit to foodwork, as they view themselves as honing their skills over time. However, when men emphasize their skillful technique too aggressively, they may be complicit with a perspective that housework is by and large the domain of unskilled labour, which plays into capitalist structures that devalue such work (Luxton 2015). Klasson and Ulver (2015) explore the implications of men setting foodwork apart from other domestic tasks. They argue that foodwork as a realm of skill and creativity can reinforce the gendered binary of men as active and women as passive. Among my participants, many fathers who cast themselves in the artisan role did indeed emphasize that their wives were comparatively less enthused about the active sense of

learning and investing in foodwork. The idea of men as professional chefs within the home further compounds this complicity with its gendered assumptions around the value of male and female labour. Sobal (2017) notes that industrial North American food systems are strongly gendered, where food production is a monetized masculine domain which takes place outside the household. In contrast, food consumption is a largely unpaid and feminized role that occurs within households. Thus, the artisan role provides an avenue for fathers to emotionally engage in and commit to foodwork, which challenges hegemonic masculinity. However, it presents several pitfalls in which men may fall into complicit masculinities that tacitly support some core tenets of hegemonic masculinity.

4.4.3 Masculinities – leader

The leader role most tangibly challenges hegemonic masculinity, as these men take on primary responsibility for foodwork, at least to some degree. While the helper role allowed men to opt out of foodwork and thus preserve that power dynamic in their relationship, leaders accepted that they would provide the structure and the impetus to make sure foodwork got done. Within this role, many leaders took on responsibility only for specific tasks, so they presented a more limited challenge to hegemonic masculinity.

Men who were leaders in foodwork did not necessarily take on primary responsibility in other areas of household labour. Travis described how his leadership across the board in foodwork did not necessarily translate to a complete revision of gendered roles in his household:

> Bridget’s doing a lot more like room cleaning, you know, laundry, and then I'm doing more like recycling and garbage and compost waste and like home projects, home repair projects. You know we're kind of falling into these like gender norms. I'm not sure why exactly. Our talents happen to suit them in some ways. Food work is maybe a strange one where I'm taking on something like not typical of my gender, especially like the cleanup part.

Travis explicitly identifies the gendered patterns in household labour that are present within his family. Elsewhere in our interview, he openly discussed gendered dynamics around foodwork that generally assign foodwork to women. This awareness aligns with Daminger's findings (2020) that individuals in heterosexual relationships characterized by equal divisions of labour or primary responsibility for men were much more cognisant of stereotypes and how they measure up against them. However, even Travis does not make the next step to investigate how these patterns have come to be, instead settling with the fact that their "talents happen to suit them." As discussed previously, justifications based on personal qualities can mask the underlying energy involved in developing and doing those forms of labour. Since he and Bridget are content with the current division of labour, there is not necessarily a reason for him to further question the roots of why things have fallen into place like this. I view this partial understanding of how gender operates as an excellent example of just how deeply woven these ideals are into the fabric of family life. McPhail et al. (2012) explore similar dynamics in their study on gendered foods. They demonstrate how individuals can identify how foods and eating patterns are gendered, describe how their own practices fit within those structures, and still emphasize the role of personal choice and traits as the most significant factor.

For Travis and Bridget, foodwork was an exception to the gendered division of household labour. This is not to discount the significance of men taking on responsibility for foodwork, as it is one of the most significant areas of household labour for many families in terms of time (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021). However, polemic masculinities in terms of foodwork do not by themselves necessarily precipitate a wholescale restructuring of the household along those lines (Klasson and Ulver 2015). This demonstrates the strength of the multiple masculinities model, which captures how individuals can bundle gender in seemingly contradictory ways. In

the case of my participants, even fathers who were leaders in foodwork still drew from some emancipated masculinities, which departed from hegemonic norms without fundamentally disrupting their structure.

4.4.4 Changes over time

As Szabo (2014a) suggests, men do not in practice enact purely hegemonic masculinities, as the concept is about an ideal towards which men strive. My participants certainly took on different roles depending on the situation or context. This simple observation opens the door to investigating how fathers can shift their involvement in foodwork and understandings of their roles. Fathers often emphasized how changes in external factors drove their division of foodwork. For instance, fathers discussed how different jobs or hours of work drive how much capacity they have to engage in foodwork at a given time. Many fathers presented this factor as—to varying extents—out of their control. In contrast, fewer fathers emphasized how their internal motivations had changed over time, which impacted their roles in foodwork. The artisan role in particular involves finding joy and building expertise in foodwork, so it provides a natural rationale for fathers to take on more tasks. Travis took on an even more significant role after the birth of Martin as it was something he enjoyed and so felt good committing to. However, the artisan role does not guarantee ever increasing foodwork. Paul has decreased his involvement in foodwork since the birth of Eva, despite proclaiming that he is more passionate about foodwork than his partner Elizabeth. Internal motivation can also come from a more explicit desire for equality. For Drew and Melanie, the division of family foodwork has changed significantly based on Drew's ongoing learning:

> It definitely changed over time 'cause when I first started hanging out with her, I first met her, she was usually cooking for me or I was just, say, doing the dishes after or doing something to kind of compensate her back. And then she kind of started teaching me how

> to cook, started realizing that I wanted to learn, and we've been incorporating that into the whole process.

Thus, Drew sees a clear progression in his foodwork, which potentially will destabilize the sense of being a helper and lead towards a more equal footing for collaboration. Though I have presented a binary of external and internal factors, I recognized that this form potentially obscures the more nuanced and ongoing ways in which fathers exercise bounded agency to shape their circumstances and adapt to structural forces. Fathers are not completely powerless to transform seemingly external situations. Fathers are also not completely at liberty to transform their cognitive and emotional states through will alone.

I believe that the idea of doing gender provides a useful insight into the nuts and bolts of how foodwork roles change over time. Fathers can do gender differently by working to emphasize certain facets of their masculinity and minimize others. As I have argued, the helper role most closely resembles a hegemonic masculinity of foodwork. However, the helper role also contains the seeds of polemic masculinities, as it provides a valued masculine way that men can begin to engage with foodwork. Szabo (2014b) argues that men who start to cook, clean up, and do other tasks in their families may—over time—foster more involved, caring relationships. If gender is something that fathers do rather than something that they are, what those fathers are doing on a daily basis very much impacts how they bundle their gender, both in terms of the tasks that are permissible for men and the ways that they go about those tasks.

When fathers seek to create and shift foodwork arrangements, they are doing so alongside their partners. For this reason, how partners communicate about foodwork plays a vital role. Several couples framed their division of foodwork as something natural that happened without significant communication or intention. For example, Travis felt that him “being the primary person to cook just fell into place. It's been that way for a long time. It's just the way of our

relationship." Participants may be satisfied with an arrangement that "fell into place". However, should they become dissatisfied due to changing circumstances or desires, the lack of communication limits their ability to alter that arrangement. Conversely, there were a few examples of couples actively discussing and evaluating their roles in foodwork. Drew described a steady progression where he has been learning to cook from Melanie and consequently taking on new tasks within his household. This dialogue was key to actively shifting how they arranged foodwork within their household.

4.4.5 Justifications

Parents described many different rationales behind how they divided up foodwork between them. As I have noted above, individuals expected at least some contribution from fathers, and the same was true for mothers. Thus, a sense of equality was one commonly cited principle used by participants to determine who should take on what. The central concern of hegemonic masculinity as a framework is how inequality is legitimized and perpetuated. However, my participants expressed many other desired ideals than complete parity between partners in foodwork, such as efficiency, enjoyment or self-expression, and flexibility. I examine the value that participants found in each of these ideas. I do so recognizing that, as many scholars have noted, the ultimate outcome of many principles for arranging foodwork apart from equality is that women continue to take primary responsibility for household labour (Beagan et al. 2008; Daminger 2020; van Hooff 2011). Daminger (2020) cautions that couples may de-gender their principles for dividing household labour, which does not explicitly allocate foodwork to women but leaves in place the underlying gendered dynamics of hegemonic masculinity that lead to women taking primary responsibility. For this reason, I pay close attention not only to how my

participants describe their rationale for dividing foodwork but also to the outcomes and structural implications of these rationales.

In doing so, I follow Doucet (2009)—who herself draws on legal scholar Deborah Rhodes—in her call for analysis that attends to the structural implications of gendered differences rather than simply denouncing whenever gendered differences exist. I believe that this approach is useful on two fronts. Firstly, it generates a more compelling critique of gendered injustices because it demands specific descriptions of how those injustices manifest. Secondly, it recognizes that individuals have some degree of agency to make decisions about what they value in relationships. I want to proceed cautiously and thoughtfully in this strand of analysis, as I recognize it runs the risk of justifying arrangements that do not ensure the well-being of all parents under the guise of ostensible benefits for one or both parents.

Participants saw merit in the idea of assigning foodwork tasks based on what people are particularly good at. Phillip expressed that it was important to "play to your strengths" in terms of foodwork and other household tasks. Bridget also discussed the importance of "seeing what our strengths are" in order to determine who should do what. This principle follows the basic economic logic that underpins the division of labour: when individuals specialize in the tasks that they are comparatively better at, the resulting production will be more efficient than everyone being a generalist. This principle led to participants dividing up roles between them rather than sharing each role. Paul and Elizabeth felt like they were so specialized that neither could do what the other does in terms of household foodwork. Daminger (2020) notes that many of her participants viewed efficiency as in competition with gender equality in divisions of labour. If one partner could do a better job in less time, both partners agreed that they should take on that task, even if it might result in one person taking on a larger share of household labour. Beagan et

al. (2008) and van Hooff (2011) find that the more competent partner in different-sex monogamous relationships is generally female, though Burnod et al. (2022) find that men in their sample generally claimed to be equally skilled in foodwork. Thus, the underlying skillsets of the partners are key to determining how distributions will shake out under the principle of efficiency.

Participants described frequent overlap between the tasks that they were good at and the tasks that they enjoyed, as I noted in the artisan role. Phillip wanted him and Sarah to be able to take on personally fulfilling roles in the household, even though he recognized that "it's not always possible for everyone to take on the roles that they want." Charles has taken on the role of baking bread for his family because he enjoys it: "obviously I wouldn't be, you know, making bread and jam and stuff like that if I didn't love it." Lupton (2000) argues that the principle of enjoyment can be particularly resistant to changes in the division of foodwork, as the partner who takes on primary responsibility has a genuine, fulfilling attachment to their role. This potential pitfall speaks to the complex nature of foodwork as both a satisfying form of care and a time-consuming form of labour (DeVault 1991). Thus, it may work at cross purposes with the principle of equality. This overlap between competency and enjoyment speaks to the process of learning skills surrounding foodwork that was often overlooked in discussions of efficiency. Participants frequently attributed the things that they were good at to personality. However, the fact that people prefer certain tasks speaks to how they can hone those skills over time, rather than just being born with an innate proclivity.

These two principles of efficiency and enjoyment make some intuitive sense as a way to divide up household foodwork. Taken together, they seek to ensure that tasks get completed not only in an efficient manner but also in a way that brings joy or satisfaction to the one who is doing them. However, they both risk assigning responsibility to the partner who happens to be

more competent or enjoy foodwork more, which is bound up in how individuals are socialized and their experiences thus far in life.

Participants also expressed the value of flexibility in who took on foodwork, both in terms of day-to-day capacity and over longer time periods. Many participants spoke about energy as a key factor that determined who took on tasks. Due to Katy's health condition, she has the capacity to complete a different amount of foodwork on any given day. Drew also faced health issues that sometimes impacted his ability to complete foodwork, and he described the importance of mutual support in his relationship with Melanie:

> We've got to give each other breaks and stuff at times. So, if we can work together and make it a little bit easier, then it'll give us that necessary time later on to—say she needs an hour break—go for a walk or something then you can take it.

Drew described the value of working together in preparing meals so that one person could step up to give some slack for the other. Many participants connected flexibility to the idea of equality, based on both partners investing the same amount of time in family foodwork. Participants described that flexibility for them means that time invested can balance out over a long period, so each parent can take on more or less responsibility at any given point so long as the overall balance is maintained. For example, Jim felt that foodwork was equitably distributed in his relationship with Susan over the long term:

> Looking at the two week food diary, it may seem like it may not be equitable if you were to sort of measure it out or try to quantify it some way, but I feel like if you were to look over like a four week or six month period, you would see it balance out over that time period, as one person took on another project, or did more or less parenting, or things like that.

Jim highlighted the limitations of research—including mine—which seeks to explore changing dynamics and situations based on a single conversation at a point in time. As Daminger (2020) cautions, the principle of flexibility runs the risk of reifying certain constraints on time or energy

as immutable and requiring accommodation, when in fact those constraints may arise from decisions that are by no means inevitable. She gives the example of work hours, which many of my participants cited as a factor that limits their involvement. While the demands of a job might be inflexible when viewed in the short term, individuals have generally made decisions over the years that result in a particular job, and they could make different decisions moving forwards.

There were certainly situations where participants ended up in unequal arrangements through the application of de-gendered principles. However, there were also families who used principles other than equality to allocate primary responsibility for certain tasks in foodwork to men. As seen in the artisan role, some men are confidently asserting their competence in and passion for foodwork. Thus, when these families rely on principles of competence and enjoyment, the resulting division could and did assign foodwork to men. Bridget asserted these two principles when she argued that "there's fairness and equality in seeing what our strengths are and what our preferences are." For her and Travis, this fairness and equality meant that he takes on the majority of the foodwork as someone who is both good at and likes doing it. Thus, while these principles can certainly be cover for traditional gender roles, they are not necessarily bound to perpetuate these roles.

4.5 Concluding thoughts

Fathers in my sample engaged in foodwork, but they did so in ways that did not neatly model or challenge hegemonic masculinity. I argue that hegemonic masculinity can and did involve foodwork for my participants, and so traditional ideas about men completely avoiding household tasks are inadequate. Instead, I explore how fathers framed themselves using three major roles—helper, artisan, and leader—and frequently moved among them. The helper role most readily reinforced hegemonic masculinity, as it allowed fathers to opt out of foodwork. The artisan role helped fathers commit to foodwork, but it risked complicitly upholding ideas about

men as skillful experts in contrast to unskilled women. The leader role called on fathers to take primary responsibility for foodwork, but they did not necessarily take over the majority of foodwork or household labour. I argue that these roles engaged men in some form of foodwork, which provided an opportunity for them to do gender differently over time and actively engage with the implications of how they rationalize their foodwork arrangements.

In this chapter, I have tried to strike the fine balance between identifying patterns and recognizing nuance. Sobal (2005) addresses this issue in his discussion of single versus multiple masculinities models. He cautions that each has risks to be considered. A single masculinity model risks obscuring crucial differences and contexts, while a multiple masculinities model risks losing sight of broader patterns in a sea of minute variations. I have tried to navigate these two extremes in my analysis, though I have strayed closer to focussing on specific contextual details as I see that as a key strength of research with small samples. My decisions around how to analyze data are shaped not only by my understandings of methodology but also by my positionality. I engage with my project as a man in a heterosexual relationship who is navigating all of the gendered dynamics surrounding household labour alongside my participants. This lived experience has made me particularly interested in how people understand and change their divisions of labour over time. My partner and I work to ensure our foodwork arrangements are fulfilling and just, and we consider what the ideal principles are to achieve those goals. Within these efforts, I struggle to determine how much of my gender identity is fixed and how much is fluid, how much agency I can exert through individual actions and how the structures around me shape my experiences. When I was making decisions about which themes and patterns from my data to emphasize, I was guided in part by my own personal vested interests as well as theoretical and empirical perspectives from literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

The nuclear family of a mother and father living together, raising, and feeding their biological children is only one of many potential family structures. Thus, I investigate the nuclear family in terms of the specific expectations and norms that surround it. In doing so, I seek to avoid making general statements about families that are not applicable or useful in understanding all family structures.

My participating families all aligned with the basic structure of the nuclear family: a male and female parent living alone with biological children. As such, they were readily intelligible to a society that valorizes and assumes a nuclear family (Fraser 2016; Luxton 2015; McPhail 2009). My participants had several other intersecting forms of privilege as white settlers. In addition, most families in my sample had incomes at or above the median for comparable family sizes in Victoria. For this reason, I argue that they were more capable than other families of meeting the exacting parenting norms of contemporary Canadian culture, which demand significant resources within the nuclear family (Fraser 2016). Furthermore, as the hegemonic ideal of the nuclear family, my participants have the potential to reinforce these exacting standards as they are held up as models. Conversely, standards which my participants were unable to achieve are even less feasible for marginalized families.

The nuclear family fills a certain perceived role in the broader economic system. Throughout much of the 20th century, norms around the nuclear family have emphasized male breadwinners and female caregivers (McPhail 2009). While women have increasingly engaged in paid labour over recent decades, they still take primary responsibility for foodwork (Hochschild and Machung 2003). Within this context, Doucet (2020) examines the complex genealogy of breadwinning as a masculine ideal. In the current context of neoliberal capitalism, there is a

particularly strong incentive for fathers to maximize earnings, as families must take on responsibility to secure financial resources so that they can meet their needs through private channels, such as paid childcare (Fraser 2016). Doucet argues that male breadwinning is not necessarily in opposition with other forms of direct care. She draws on the feminist economic concept of provisioning, which calls attention to all the forms of labour—paid and unpaid—that contribute to providing for one's family. This perspective rejects a simple dichotomy of separate spheres and instead calls attention to how breadwinning might be one valuable paternal role among many in the context of a given family. Doucet cautions that there is a fine balance between recognizing breadwinning as a potential form of paternal care and valorizing fathers who consistently prioritize paid work over time spent with their families.

There are also strong cultural norms in contemporary North American societies of how parents should engage with their children. One key norm that scholars investigate is intensive mothering, where mothers are expected to take responsibility for the wellbeing of their children and devote significant time and energy to ensuring this wellbeing (Fielding-Singh and Cooper 2022). Cairns and Johnston (2015) examine how intensive mothering requires mothers to carefully calibrate their attitudes, behaviours, and emotions in relation to household foodwork. For example, mothers should carefully manage their children's diet to avoid picky eaters but not be so controlling that they deprive their child of opportunities for enjoying foods. Cairns and Johnston highlight the strain that these expectations place on mothers, as they constantly try to thread the needle. Oleschuk (2019) identifies another pressure faced by mothers that stems from a dominant cultural schema where individuals overwhelmingly cite their mothers as the preeminent influence in learning to cook. Oleschuk critiques how this narrative responsibilizes mothers and obscures the other relationships and experiences that help individuals develop an

ability to cook. I explore how mothers—and fathers—in my sample navigate this complex network of cultural expectations that come along with the nuclear family. I examine whether fathers also take on responsibility for intensive parenting.

The nuclear family can be an isolating structure for parents, particularly in the context of the COVID pandemic. Fox (2019) notes that people often struggle to connect with social networks of care and support as they transition into parenthood. Luxton (2015) argues that this trend extends past the transition to parenthood and is part of a broader pressure for families to fend for themselves. Furthermore, as family sizes in North America have decreased over recent decades, the nuclear family frequently has only a few members (Fox 2015). In my sample, the majority of families were composed of two parents and one child, though some of those families expressed desires for more children. In this small and isolated unit, parents can feel alone in their challenges. The COVID pandemic has only exacerbated these experiences of isolation. Following a piece of advice from my supervisor Dr. Anelyse Weiler, I understand the pandemic as an event which acted upon and through the structures and issues that predated it. Thus, the question is not whether COVID has fundamentally transformed family foodwork but rather what existing structures or circumstances has it brought into focus. For my participants, COVID contributed to intense feelings of isolation from family, friends, and communities. During the pandemic, families were encouraged and often required to restrict their social circles. In British Columbia, public health officials implored households to limit in-person interactions as much as possible in order to reduce transmission of COVID (Emergency Management BC n.d.). Many community programs were moved online—if possible—or placed on indefinite hold. Ollivier et al. (2021) explore how such pandemic restrictions impacted new mothers. Specifically, they examined long form online survey responses from Nova Scotian mothers with infants under one

in May and June of 2020. Participants emphasized their intense feelings of isolation as they tried to navigate the challenges of new parenthood with drastically reduced social supports, such as visits from family or parenting groups. I explore how my participants experienced feelings of isolation as well as the times when they sought out support from individuals and communities outside their nuclear family.

In this chapter, I examine one central question: how do parents navigate contemporary norms and expectations regarding foodwork in a nuclear family? Throughout my findings, I identify responsibilization as a key dynamic within participating families, which Wakefield and Fleming (2009) define as "the process whereby subjects are rendered individually responsible for a task which previously would have been the duty of another – usually a state agency – or would not have been recognized as a responsibility at all" (277). With this concept, I emphasize how parents in the nuclear family internalize or push back against a sense of total responsibility for feeding their children. I explore how parents navigated these pressures to fend for themselves, particularly in the context of a pandemic which exacerbated some of these pressures to be an isolated unit. Specifically, I examine how participants shouldered the responsibilities as a family to appropriately raise their children, provide for themselves financially, and support one another. I found that both mothers and fathers felt a sense of responsibility to meet many expectations of the nuclear family and worked to achieve them, even when they struggled to muster the necessary resources to do so. While participants challenged the gendered norms of intensive mothering by sharing many parental responsibilities between mothers and fathers, they did not necessarily challenge the broader responsibilization of the nuclear family within neoliberalism. Parents primarily addressed the expectations upon them as an isolated unit. However, there were some cases where participants accessed and fostered networks of support beyond the nuclear

family, such as close family members or neighbours. In doing so, participants subverted neoliberal pressures to fend for themselves and illuminated potential alternative arrangements.

5.1 Children

Within the nuclear family, parents are responsible not only for materially providing for children but also for fostering their children's relationships with food and foodwork. My participants very much felt that responsibility. They expressed their hopes that they could equip their children with the necessary skills, attitudes, and expectations to navigate the complex world of foodwork. Participants discussed how they worked to achieve these hopes by involving children in the process of foodwork however possible. They also discussed how they seek to foster healthy eating habits and equitable relationship dynamics around foodwork. I find that parents challenge the gendered expectation that women will perform and teach foodwork but do so by men also shouldering intensive parenting norms.

Participants made clear that they cared deeply about eating together as a family, even though they did not always do so. For example, Travis described shared meals with his wife and child as "something that's important to both of us because I had that in my childhood. It was like some consistency and kind of social gathering that I really value." Travis put energy into ensuring that he could provide dinners for his nuclear family, a traditionally feminine expectation. DeVault (1991) argues that family meals are a key site of traditional values around food, as they provide a space to do the nuclear family. Though Travis challenged the gendered norm around which parent would provide the family meal, he still felt responsible to deliver this core ritual of family foodwork. Other participants also emphasized how much they value eating together, though the practice was a logistical challenge for some. Carolyn and Jack both discussed how—despite their best intentions—they sometimes struggle to eat together with their child due to the constraints of Jack's work schedule. Carolyn described how she tries to make

family meals happen but sometimes is too hungry to wait for Jack to finish work. Bowen et al. (2014) note that family meals of home-cooked food are a cultural expectation that puts particular stress on parents who lack time and other necessary resources. Thus, the family meal is an appealing and potentially demanding practice for families.

Participants discussed their efforts to include children not just in eating meals but also in preparing food. Many parents with young children wanted them to be present in the kitchen, even before they were actually able to perform foodwork. Bridget tries to have her child spend time with her in the kitchen, but she stated that "I don't love to cook when Martin is like right there." She—along with other participants—expressed an interest in learning towers to provide a contained, safe space in the kitchen for their children who would otherwise need to be held. Participants expressed interest in other implements as stepping stones to develop cooking skills from a young age. Jim described wanting to acquire toddler-safe knives for his child so that she could participate in foodwork. These items and tools were part of the broader efforts by parents to include their children in foodwork. Cairns and Johnston (2015) describe how mothers struggled to muster the resources they perceived were necessary to include their children in foodwork. Many of my participants had the money to purchase various items for their kitchen that were seen to support their children's learning. Thus, they potentially reinforced expectations for parents to buy not only appropriate food for their children but also material aids so that their children would develop proper foodwork skills.

As participants discussed how to engage their children in foodwork, many parents consciously tried to model behaviour that challenges gendered expectations of who is responsible for foodwork. Drew stated that he contributes to foodwork along with Melanie as a way to demonstrate a healthy relationship dynamic for their daughter: "We both try to put in effort for

stuff, so it shows that she should look for maybe a mate that's the same way." Drew was well aware of the fact that many men do not engage substantially in foodwork, and he wanted to ensure his daughter—if she ended up with a male partner—would expect better. Drew was learning to cook primarily from his partner Melanie since he "didn't really grow up in a household where I was allowed to cook. I was more or less doing dishes or kind of shooed out of the kitchen while things are going on." Though Melanie was still taking on the task of teaching foodwork skills as a woman, Drew emphasized that he hoped to pass on those skills to their daughter, thus breaking the cycle of responsibility for women and mothers (Oleschuk 2019). Phillip emphasized a different facet of his relationship with foodwork for his children. He consciously tried to model that people of all genders can experience joy and fulfillment in foodwork:

> I think everybody needs to be engaged in food and excited about food. And I also kind of want to set that example for my kids, not only for themselves but the kind of people that they'll be having relationships with.

Phillip sought to shape not only how his children engage with foodwork but also what they expect from partners. He made clear that this perspective did not come from his own mother, who he stated was "was a terrible cook and didn't like it." These fathers actively reflected on how they try to challenge gendered norms around who should be responsible for and excited about foodwork in relationships.

These fathers were engaging in self-surveillance. Fielding-Singh and Cooper (2022) examine this practice in their research on mothers, who are expected to constantly monitor their actions and attitudes in order to ensure they are adequately performing their role as parents. Fielding-Singh and Cooper critique self-surveillance for reinforcing norms around the nuclear family. I argue that fathers practiced self-surveillance in a way that challenged some norms while

potentially upholding others. Fathers were very concerned with modelling that people of all genders can and should do foodwork. They were extremely conscious of how their own children might internalize and reproduce any gendered expectations from their households. This responsibility perhaps became more intense during phases of the pandemic where families significantly reduced their social interactions, so children were seeing very few individuals outside their nuclear families. My participants used self-surveillance to challenge the norm that mothers should take sole responsibility for foodwork. However, they potentially reinforced the broader climate of intensive parenting, where parents must scrutinize their behaviours. I argue that the key question surrounding self-surveillance lies in the expectations that parents seek to meet. For Fielding-Singh and Cooper (2022), the mothers sought to continuously increase their foodwork in an unsustainable manner. For my participants, fathers sought to reflexively engage in foodwork. Thus, while there is a potential to reinforce intensive parenting, the expectation is more manageable.

Both mothers and fathers in my sample were engaged in what they described as the rewards and demands of raising their children to engage with food and foodwork. In doing so, they challenged the norm that mothers in the nuclear family are solely responsible for these roles. However, I caution that parents in some cases merely extended intensive mothering to include fathers rather than fundamentally disrupting the expectations of intensive parenting.

5.2 Employment

In a neoliberal world, nuclear families are expected to secure the necessary financial resources to meet their own needs through the market (Fraser 2016). They have limited access to external financial support from sources such as policy interventions or community mutual aid. This context means that parents must carefully navigate decisions around how to structure wage labour alongside other important responsibilities. Not all families have the same ability to make

decisions; poorer families have significantly fewer possibilities and significantly more constraints. As explored in the previous chapter, work is a key factor that shapes how fathers engage with foodwork. In this section, I examine in closer detail two common experiences of my participants: parental leave and working from home during the COVID pandemic. These cases demonstrate some of the privileges that many of my participants experienced. Several participants were currently on parental leave with their children, while others had accessed it previously. Parental leave can serve to buffer the neoliberal expectations that families will be solely responsible for their own finances, but it does so only for some families. As Doucet, Mathieu, and McKay (2020) note, roughly 35 percent of Canadian mothers outside of Québec are not eligible to receive parental benefits through the federal system. Many of my participants were able to access parental leave and thus make decisions around how to use it. As well, parents from five of seven families were able to work from home at some point during the pandemic, which was not an option for all Canadian households (Zossou 2021). These situations involve parents engaging with the blurry line between public and private spheres. DeVault (1991) argues that "the dominant idea of family in Western industrial societies has developed as part of the construction over time of an ideological distinction between 'public' and 'private' realms (15). She suggests that the hegemonic understanding of family in North America involves an emotional unit that is buffered from the outside world and operates according to its own logic. These two situations defy that simple binary, as parents navigate responsibilities from various roles that span their "public" and "private" lives. However, even as parents defy gendered expectations around who takes on public or private roles, they remain caught within a wider expectation that they are responsible to financially provide for themselves as a nuclear family.

5.2.1 Parental leave

Parents of infants and young children have tough choices to make around how they structure parental leave, if indeed they have access to leave through the government and/or their employer. I explore two cases of families—Drew and Melanie and Carolyn and Jack—who negotiated financial constraints as well as another family—Travis and Bridget—who navigated other cultural norms.

Drew works on and off in wage labour. He does so in part so that his government disability benefits are not clawed back, which happens when he makes over $5,000 annually. He has minimized employment to focus on "mainly doing the whole dad role" since his daughter's birth. Melanie currently has a low-level government job but is in school to upgrade her credentials following parental leave. She has been able to do her classes online, so both parents were able to be primarily at home since their daughter's birth a year ago. While they have greatly appreciated this situation, Drew described the stress of ensuring they have sufficient income to afford groceries. These stresses have been compounded by unpredictable food shortages during the pandemic and surging grocery prices in the months preceding our interview (Statistics Canada 2022a). Furthermore, Drew and Melanie do not currently have access to a vehicle, so they must walk, bus, or taxi to and from the grocery store. Beagan, Chapman, and Power (2018) explore how low-income families practice food provisioning, including planning meals and shopping. They argue that parents leverage considerable skills and knowledge in the effort of food provisioning with a limited budget. While Drew and Melanie very much demonstrate these skills, Drew emphasized feeling like their finances prevented them from feeding their child as they would like to: "we try to kind of shop around if we can. See where's the cheapest place to get stuff. But unfortunately it's usually Walmart. I wish I could support more local places." Drew felt a common pressure for parents: not only securing the finances to adequately feed their child

but also consuming responsibly in order to support broader values (Cairns and Johnston 2015). I raise this point not to pass judgement on whether or not parents should buy food from "local places" instead of Walmart but to emphasize the complex ways in which parents feel keenly responsible for financial matters. For Drew, limited employment opened certain possibilities for foodwork but also came with significant constraints.

In a very different arrangement of parental leave, Jack is working full-time as a teacher and coach outside the home during Carolyn's parental leave—from her position as a teacher—with their newborn son. He stated that his most significant role in foodwork currently is to "buy the food." As the partner at home, Carolyn described a "shift" in their division of foodwork:

> I would say there's definitely been a shift. Like, since Jessie was born, I do feel that with the food work, I do more of it. And part of that is circumstantial because Jack's jobs. He's a teacher as well, and so we don't have contracts that are consistent. So, it's like piecemeal work, so every year it's changing. And this year he has a full-time job. So he's got a full-time teaching job, and the coaching, which is also full-time pretty much. So because he's so busy, and I'm at home because I'm not working, so it's definitely shifted into my space more, and I take that on.

Carolyn felt that foodwork had "shifted into my space more" as a result of her being at home and Jack being at work. She used the language of space to identify why she had taken on more responsibility. This particular arrangement is "circumstantial", as both parents have dealt with inconsistent schedules in their work as teachers. Jack expressed frustration with how many hours he is currently working, but he felt that change was "not an option right now." Instead, he expressed a desire to reduce his work outside the home going forwards: "Now that we're full time, we can be more selective about our hours. So I plan on going back to at least that portion of work teaching maybe 60%. So that I can be around home more." Additionally, he looked toward the summer as a time when he could contribute more, as he would have a break from coaching and teaching responsibilities at that point. Jack's case demonstrates the complex nature of male

breadwinning (Doucet 2020). He takes on a key role in financially providing so that his family can afford food. However, he also recognizes the limitations of this role in terms of the time and capacity he has to contribute in the household. As Doucet (2020) argues, breadwinning is only one form of care among many, and it does not provide a full sense of contributing to one's family.

Travis and Bridget are both established British Columbia government employees, so they were able to access 18 months of paid parental leave between them. They had sufficient financial security to use the full extent of this leave without worrying about a shortage of income. Travis described the other pressures and constraints that he and Bridget navigated while making decisions around parental leave:

> I'm a proponent of equality, but I'm also, you know, I have all the privileges of a white man, you know, in 2022, so... But anyway I proposed to her "let's do the 18, let's split it to 9 and 9", you know, a nice even split, that's what some friends of mine did. Bridget felt quite strongly about taking a bit more time, and I think she had some good arguments around, you know, like the recovery after birth, and the fact that like breastfeeding might require a bit more of her time, and societal expectations around, like, you know, she didn't want to be judged by her coworkers or friends for maybe not fulfilling her motherly duties and asserting her motherly rights, or something like that. It was a bit of a big discussion. She wanted 12 for her and 6 for me, and it was, it was actually a discussion that kind of lingered on a little bit until we finally compromised on 10 and a half and 7 and a half.

Travis saw complete equality as the ideal, with a "nice even split" between the two parents. In response, Bridget raised the biophysical and cultural constraints she foresaw as a new mother that necessitated more time on leave. She was the parent responsible for physically birthing and producing breastmilk for the child, which would be significant demands on her energy. When she reflected on the experience of feeding Martin only breastmilk for the first seven months of his life, Bridget indeed described it as "a bit of a struggle." Bridget also anticipated potential judgement from peers if she failed to "fulfill her motherly duties," in Travis' words. Bridget

herself described other experiences in which she did feel judgement from her coworkers on the basis of gender. When she brings in lunches made by Travis, people will jokingly ask what he has made her that day. While it might seem innocuous, Bridget felt a nagging sense of guilt tied to these remarks, as they emphasized how she as a woman does not take primary responsibility for foodwork. In the end, Travis and Bridget decided that absolute equality was not in fact the optimal way to approach parental leave. Their case demonstrates the many structural factors influencing a seemingly personal decision. Doucet (2016) notes how discourses around stay at home dads—such as Travis—often frame the arrangement as a personal choice. While Travis did make a decision to stay home with Martin, he did so in the context of numerous factors, including norms around equality and the role of mothers. Thus, even in a case where income was not a significant constraint, parents have numerous factors to consider and navigate surrounding parental leave.

5.2.2 Working from home

Prior to the pandemic, scholars have documented that men generally worked more hours in paid work than women, and these jobs were primarily outside the household (Moyser and Burlock 2018; Zossou 2021). Many of my participants transitioned to working from home for at least some portion of the pandemic due to government restrictions or decisions by employers. These experiences are indicative of many other Canadian households. As of June 2020, almost 40% of Canadians in the workforce had worked from home at some point, compared to only 17% prior to the pandemic (Zossou 2021). Working from home challenges the clear division of public and private realms and instead presents different possibilities in terms of family foodwork. However, I find that working from home did not necessarily shift the foodwork arrangements of

my participants. I consider what lasting impacts may come from working from home as many participants transition back to in-person work environments.

Working from home had significant impacts in some households, while it made little difference in others. Some participants noted how working from home provided a chance for both partners to step up. Jim said that his and Susan's division of foodwork became "more balanced, I would say. When we were both kicking around the house, we would alternate one or the other person doing the work of food prep." In their case, both partners were suddenly at home, so they could have more intentional arrangements for foodwork. Phillip described the value of working from home in terms of his larger role in household labour, particularly with a newborn:

> Harold was born a little over a month after we went into the initial lockdown, and I was abruptly teaching from home. So Sarah still expresses her appreciation for me to be able to like wrangle the other kids, do the bulk of the work around food, and some of the domestic tasks for that few months, and just be around.

Phillip would have been teaching full-time in the classroom, so the pandemic prompted an unplanned shift in his family's work and foodwork arrangements. Despite continuing to work full-time, he also stepped up to care for their older children and "do the bulk of the work around food." Other participants described fairly minimal impacts of working from home on their foodwork arrangements. Charles spent almost two years working from home during the pandemic, and his teenaged sons also went to remote classes for school. However, he remarked that "food wise, it was pretty much the same. Travis transitioned to working from home after the birth of his child, several months prior to the pandemic. During the period when Bridget was on parental leave, he described a routine that strongly distinguished wage labour and household labour: "I would work my full day, and Bridget would do the breakfast and lunch with the baby, and then I would come down and start cooking dinner." These fathers maintained strong

distinctions between work and household responsibilities, even if both were completed in the same physical space (Daminger 2020). I argue that they could do so in part because there were strong overriding factors that determined their foodwork divisions: for Charles and Katy, her health condition; for Travis and Bridget, his commitment to family foodwork. They experienced minimal impacts from the transition to working from home as they were already firmly established in certain roles. In contrast, Jim and Phillip both described their foodwork arrangements as more flexible and open to change, so the transition to working from home sparked more significant shifts. These cases demonstrate how COVID acted upon existing structures and so had variable impacts from household to household.

Many participants transitioned back into in-person work, which calls into question the lasting impacts of COVID on work arrangements. Phillip returned to teaching in-person in the fall of 2020, and consequently his role within family foodwork diminished:

> I would love to be the person who did most of the cooking, but also being the person who is out of the house mostly for work the most, and I also take on way more like community stuff and academic stuff than I can maintain a balance with. So, it falls to her a lot more then [pauses] just out of practical necessity, right? Especially with the 3 kids, and she works part time from home.

Phillip's case demonstrates how shifts in household arrangements precipitated by the pandemic are potentially impermanent. When Phillip transitioned back to teaching in schools, Sarah had to shoulder more of the foodwork as the partner working fewer hours in wage labour, particularly since she continued to work from home. Carolan (2021) is among the many scholars who conducted studies on foodwork in the early months of the pandemic. He documents many shifts in parents' foodwork arrangements but openly wonders whether they will stick as structural factors continue to shift. I argue that the impacts of COVID on employment and foodwork for my participants align with the general trend to reforming rather than transforming expectations

around the nuclear family. The COVID pandemic has not fundamentally shaken up Canadian economic structures and policy regarding families as scholars may have hoped (Doucet et al. 2020). Instead, I see evidence that families might have more flexible arrangements within the constraints of financial responsibility, similar to how participants describe other measures arising from the pandemic. For example. Charles mentioned that his family initially moved to online grocery shopping because of social distancing restrictions and then realized its value for their situation where Katy plans meals but cannot leave the house. Similarly, I argue that the pandemic has pushed employers and employees to consider ways in which jobs can translate to remote work. For example, Bridget has continued to work from home occasionally after returning from her parental leave. However, working from home does not address the broader requirement for parents to take financial responsibility for their families and thus the pressure to make decisions around employment towards that goal.

5.3 Social connections

Many participants struggled with being isolated within the nuclear family as parents during COVID, missing out on social connections and community programs. Carolyn succinctly described her struggles as a new parent in a way that resonated with many other participants' stories: "I found parenting pretty isolating and, you know, you throw in a pandemic, and it's just, yeah, it's a bit challenging." Despite these challenges, parents found ways to connect with family, friends, and other community members. In doing so, they partially pushed back against pressures for their nuclear family to be a self-sufficient unit, though relationships with family—usually parents—remained the most significant support network.

During the pandemic, my participants drastically reduced their social circles due to government restrictions and warnings about COVID transmission. One way these trends intersected with foodwork was that my participants missed eating together as a social occasion

and instead had come to associate food in part with safety concerns. Carolyn, Bridget, Paul, and Phillip all described this situation as a major impact of COVID on their foodways. In a particularly poignant example, Phillip lamented how the pandemic disrupted his family's hospitality:

> I like our house to be sort of like [pauses] it doesn't have to be a big event or an ordeal to have people join you for food. But I want them to be welcome and invited and have them over, and whether that's my kids' friends, or our adult friends, or family. And that really shut down.

Phillip felt that sharing food was a key way that he engaged with his communities, and he spoke at length about how COVID had thoroughly discouraged that practice and isolated his family from their community. He connected this situation to an ideological shift he perceived during the pandemic where "food became from community and connection to safety and fear." Numerous scholars explore the significance of sharing food as a way to build and maintain relationships that extend beyond the nuclear family (Klasson and Ulver 2015; Oleschuk 2020). My participants keenly felt the loss of those connections. They also manifested the "safety and fear" attitude towards food in concerns about children. Elizabeth described how she continues to breastfeed her daughter Eva in some part as a way to pass on viral antibodies, which she hopes will reduce her child's risk of contracting COVID. Other parents described efforts to minimize the length of shopping trips and use protective sheeting for their carts in an effort to reduce the likelihood of COVID transmission to their children during these excursions that suddenly had a new element of danger (Carolan 2021). Cairns and Johnston (2015) extensively explore how intensive mothering holds mothers accountable for ensuring that food reinforces rather than threatens the safety of their child. During the pandemic, safety concerns were paramount, and my participants expressed some concern about how they were trying to safeguard their children.

Parents of young children found it almost impossible to disentangle whether seeing and eating with others less was connected to parenting or pandemic. In my sample, three families had children born after March 2020, while three more had children under the age of three. Since most of these families had only one child, they had no reference point for parenting outside a pandemic. Bridget talked about how "COVID happened and Martin [their child] happened at the same time", so she could not clearly differentiate the impacts on their lifestyle. Paul described how, since the birth of his daughter, food had become "more a family service thing than a social party thing." Simultaneously, he connected this trend to the pandemic: "COVID screwed—the manif—the multiple effects of that, right? Not wanting to socialize with people, not knowing people as much anymore, like, who to even invite, you know?" Between social restrictions and the demands of new parenthood, Paul described "not knowing people as much anymore." Parents could not clearly write off shifting relationships with food and social connection as effects of the pandemic. In this way, they found that becoming a nuclear family meant that they had less time to connect with others outside of that structure. Fox (2019) notes that many parents struggled with feelings of intense isolation and lack of support in the period immediately following the birth of their children.

Participants described how they rely to varying degrees on their own parents for support in raising and feeding their children. Elizabeth and Paul have relied extensively on Paul's parents in order to balance parenting and work responsibilities. Elizabeth works in an office while Paul works from home, so he goes with Eva to his parents' house every day during the week. They eat breakfast, lunch, and some dinners there, and the grandparents provide some childcare during the day. Elizabeth and Paul noted that COVID actually made this arrangement possible, as Paul's parents usually travel extensively but were not able to do so during the pandemic. While this

case was the most extensive involvement of grandparents in my sample, several other parents discussed ways in which they seek support from their parents: Carolyn timed visits with her parents to coincide with her husband's work trips, Jim's daughter spends one day a week with her grandparents, and Phillip's children spend significant time with his wife's parents. During the pandemic, when many of my participants followed encouragement from public health officials and peers to retreat into the nuclear family in terms of social interactions, grandparents were a key exception. Neuman, Eli, and Nowicka (2019) explore how many parents rely extensively on their own parents in the process of feeding their families. They suggest that grandmothers in particular often provide help with foodwork that rivals or exceeds the contribution of fathers. Though my participants did not describe that degree of reliance, they certainly valued their parents. These relationships do challenge the isolation of the nuclear family to some degree, but I caution the scope of these challenges is often minimal. While these relationships extend beyond the nuclear family, they are still bounded by the idea of family and thus keep the circle of support fairly small. One key financial issue that this dynamic raises is that generations within the family tend to have similar socio-economic status, and inter-generational mobility (i.e. the chances of changing socio-economic status) has been decreasing in Canada over recent decades (Connolly, Haeck, and Lapierre 2021). Thus, I foresee a risk that relying on grandparents as opposed to broader communal networks or government interventions will further exacerbate disparities between rich and poor families. While grandparents can be a valuable form of support, they alone are not a solution to the isolation faced within the nuclear family.

Participants did try to connect with support networks in their broader communities, though these efforts were hampered by the pandemic. Drew and Melanie shared food from their

produce box with another member of the program “because sometimes her kids will eat stuff that we won't eat or vice versa.” Drew also described sharing food with friends and neighbours who were struggling to access food for financial or other reasons. In these ways, Drew and Melanie use food as a way to build and maintain connections with their community. Katy struggles with an illness that severely limits her physical capacity, so rotating members of Charles and Katy’s church provide their family with a weekly dinner. This community seeks to support and care for their family through food. Despite the isolation of COVID, Charles and Katy could feel held by a network of support. I find it telling that two families facing some of the most significant challenges in my sample engaged most extensively in communal networks of support. Hendrickson, Massengale, and Cantrell (2020) explore the many ways in which people access food through informal networks and communal institutions. They argue that these actions not only help people immediately but also serve to foster a richer and more supportive sense of community. These communities and networks were certainly impacted by the pandemic. Prior to COVID, Drew and Melanie attended a weekly baby group that provided information and a supportive space for new parents as well as a produce box. Once the pandemic hit, these meetings became monthly. Elizabeth and Paul also described various support groups for parents that they participated in disbanding due to the pandemic. Phillip described how “all the festivals around food too, like we press apples and all that kind of stuff, all that was just evaporated.” A local community garden started restricting access to plot holders when it had previously encouraged others, and the food bank switched from delivery to pickup. However, in the midst of these disruptions, many parents still managed to connect with their communities.

5.4 Concluding thoughts

Parents struggled to manage all the responsibilities they took on as a nuclear family. They martialled their resources to take responsibility for fostering their children’s relationships with

food, which demanded sufficient time and energy from them. They structured employment to secure the necessary finances to feed and care their families, with little other option to feed their families. They weathered the isolation of becoming parents and restricting social interactions during the COVID pandemic. In all of these aspects, some families fared better than others. One common theme was that families with financial resources were able to meet these expectations more readily. They could afford kitchen items designed for their children. They could access parental leave and working from home, which opened up more options.

On the whole, I find that my participants rejected some of the gendered expectations that come along with the nuclear family, such as who would pass on knowledge about foodwork or stay at home with children. However, this resistance served to incorporate fathers into standards of intensive parenting rather than challenging those standards. There were some exceptions in families who reached out for support from their communities, though their communities often meant grandparents. I do not wish to dismiss the importance of challenging gendered norms and expectations surrounding the nuclear family. As someone who grew up in a very hegemonic nuclear family and looks toward the future where my own family might take that structure, I recognize that it is neither easy nor simple to push back against the gendered norms. Participants made clear how much they value sharing foodwork responsibilities with their partners. However, when nuclear families are expected to take on such a broad range of responsibilities, sharing the burden between two parents can only go so far.

My goal in this critique is to identify how families might fall into expectations that do not ultimately serve their wellbeing. My project raises questions around how to more adequately support parents to challenge intensive norms and set expectations for themselves that are feasible and meaningful. If responsibilization of the nuclear family is a central issue, it logically follows

that parents need more extensive and intensive networks of support that distribute those responsibilities.

Some solutions could involve policy reforms from various levels of government. Doucet et al. (2020) provide detailed recommendations for how parental leave programs in Canada could better meet families' needs. They argue that federal parental leave policy should more strongly encourage fathers through non-transferable leave, where part of the time allotted to a family for paid parental leave is only accessible to fathers. While I acknowledge that this is a paternalistic measure that somewhat limits parents' ability to choose, I argue that it is nevertheless a worthy measure to push fathers to challenge gendered norms around breadwinning as the overriding paternal responsibility. Doucet et al. thoughtfully address improvements in parental leave for families of different social classes. They call for benefits to have higher wage replacement rates that incentivize higher earners. They also highlight the issues of providing parental leave through the Employment Insurance [EI] program, as many poorer families do not meet the various eligibility requirements such as hours worked in a given time period. They note that many federal government programs brought in during the COVID pandemic—notably the Canada Emergency Response Benefit [CERB] which provided payments to those experiencing work disruptions—had far less stringent criteria and thus included vulnerable segments of the population. CERB also may have contributed to significant decreases in food insecurity across Canada during initial months of the pandemic by helping ensure families had the financial resources to access food (Polsky and Garriguet 2022). Thus, parental leave programs must be coupled with other financial supports to families in order to help parents avoid the choice between securing the necessary means to support their families and spending quality time with them.

Other solutions could involve mutual aid within communities. Parents described how they draw support from friends, neighbours, church members, and parenting groups. While these networks might be less formal than policy measures, they are of incredible importance to families. Participants lamented how the pandemic disrupted their communities. In this context, groups and organizations were forced to consider how to provide support through remote means (Carolan 2021). Moving forwards, communities can draw on this newfound literacy to combine in-person and virtual elements as they work together to support otherwise isolated parents. All of these measures seek to distribute the responsibility of feeding a family so that parents do not face the task alone.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I explored how parents in nuclear families do, undo, and redo gender in their practices of foodwork. Through these practices, parents can further entrench gendered divisions of labour and roles, but they can also transform themselves and their communities. I teased apart the conditions and contexts in which foodwork functions in these two ways. In the fourth chapter, I found that fathers see several different roles for themselves in family foodwork: helpers, artisans, and leaders. The helper role dovetails with hegemonic masculinity as it preserves fathers' power to opt out of foodwork even as they engage to some extent. The artisan and leader roles are more polemic in their challenge of hegemonic masculinity, though they can at times slip into complicitly supporting it. All these roles provide masculine ways to help feed one's family, which I argue starts a process by which fathers can over time take on more caring responsibilities. This process does not necessarily require families to explicitly strive for equality in foodwork, though they certainly risk falling into gendered arrangements if they do not. In the fifth chapter, I expanded beyond the relationship of fathers and mothers to examine norms connected to the nuclear family. I found that parents generally tried to reject the gendering of norms associated with the nuclear family, including responsibility for teaching children about food and foodwork or securing income for the family. In many cases, parents did not reject the norms themselves, which in practice meant extending intensive parenting expectations to fathers rather than challenging the validity of those expectations. I do not wish to discount the significance of this step for my participants, as it helped them share the burden of raising children. However, since parents still succumbed to pressures isolating them in the nuclear family, they struggled to access broader networks of support that could further distribute the burden.

Taken together, my findings speak to the complexity of contemporary parenting standards and gender roles. I explored ways in which fathers are stepping up as caring and involved parents in foodwork as well as situations where they remain more marginal. I saw that mothers desire to share their responsibilities but also deal with guilt and uncertainty about doing so. This complexity is inevitable in a study that recognizes the interplay between individual agency and structural conditions. I demonstrate that parents can consciously shift the ways that they do gender, and they also can act upon and transform their circumstances to varying degrees. For example, parents can make choices about how they organize work, depending on their class and income security. However, other circumstances—such as pandemic social restrictions or health issues—are less susceptible to individual decisions. I have at times struggled to comprehend and analyze this balance of structure and agency in my thesis, but I strive to do so because it illuminates the possibilities for both individual and societal level shifts. I believe that parents can actively reflect on how they divide up responsibility for foodwork and feel empowered to reconsider their arrangement (Daminger 2020). To effectively make these changes, they require structural supports. Men need to be socialized from a young age to develop a full range of foodwork skills—physical, emotional, and cognitive—if they are going to take on responsibility as fathers. This learning can happen in the family—something my participants were trying to do—but must also come from peer groups, schools, and other social institutions (Oleschuk 2019). Furthermore, parents need more expansive financial and social support networks in order to spread the burden of feeding and raising their children. My thesis does not purport to represent the experiences of all families, and so these suggestions are only a small subset of the diverse supports that are needed for different family structures. Further research on

the foodwork experiences of diverse families—queer families, single parents, inter-generational households—will help identify how to tailor these supports.

Findings from my thesis contributed in a small way to scholarly conversations around gender norms and foodwork, providing some further context and raising a host of further questions. My research was limited to a point in time, whereas longitudinal research on how men's roles in foodwork shift or stabilize over time would significantly aid in our understanding of how these dynamics evolve as families deal with different circumstances. For example, I primarily studied parents who spoke about how they planned to incorporate children into foodwork. Longitudinal research would clarify how these intentions hold up and translate into action. I initially intended to focus more substantially on the specific demands that food box programs place on family foodwork. While I did not successfully recruit a sample that could speak to this topic, I believe that further research on how eaters navigate their place in local food systems is crucial to helping grow those systems.

My participants spent significant periods of time engaged in foodwork every day, as do I, as do so many people. While these routine practices of foodwork can reinforce gendered inequities, they can also provide opportunities to reimagine how to do gender and parenting in ways that are more meaningful, achievable, and sustainable. I spoke to fathers and mothers who described foodwork as a way to care for each other, their children, and their communities. Food is so deeply connected to disparate aspects of our lives, and so care can spread along these pathways to nourish us all.

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